A LOVE SONG for the MISERABLE

雪うぶれ情歌と悪の華

YUKIMURA

June

A LOVE SONG for the MISERABLE

堕ちぶれ詩士は愛の唄

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Transiation	Sachiko Sato
Lettering	Studio Lace
Graphic Design/Layout	Wendy Lee/ Michelle Mauk
Editing	Wendy Lee
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YES... I LOVE IT.
I JUST KNEW YOU'D LOVE THIS TASTE, ASADA-SAN.
ALL RIGHT!
THERE IS SOMETHING I WANT TO SAY.
- THE TARTNESS IS WELL-BALANCED
CLINK
BUT RATHER THAN THE COURAGE TO BE ABLE TO EXPRESS IT -
THIS TASTES THE BEST OUT OF EVERYTHING YOU'VE MADE SO FAR, NAO
...I LOVE -
I WISH I HAD THE WITS TO KEEP IT CONCEALED...

落ちぶれ紳士に愛の唄

Love song for the miserable

CHAPTER 1

SO LATE AT NIGHT, IN A RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT LIKE THIS...
OH MAN...
THUMP

I'M LOST.

STAGGER...
HEY, ARE YOU REALLY LISTENING?
HIC
THEY JUST DON'T GET IT AT ALL
YOU AGREE, RIGHT?!

OK, OK... I GET IT, ASADA..
STOP ACTING SO PATHETIC OVER SUCH A SMALL THING.
YOU'RE STILL THE HOPE OF OUR DEPARTMENT, YOU KNOW
JUST BECAUSE YOUR IDEA DIDN'T MAKE IT THROUGH FOR CONSIDERATION. .
ASADA!!
CRASH!
STUMBLE
WHOA!
BUT IT JUST MAKES ME SO MAD!
I DIDN'T WANT THINGS TO REMAIN THIS WAY, DON'T YOU SEE?!

SNAP...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT..?
MY LIFE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE THIS...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
JUST FORGET IT..
LEAVE ME ALONE.
...BE SURE TO GET TO WORK PROPERLY TOMORROW, OKAY?
WHY DOESN'T ANYBODY UNDERSTAND?
GEEZ...
HE REALLY DID LEAVE ME.

BUT I CAN'T LET SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE THE DIVISION SUBMIT HIS PLANS TO THE COMPETITION
IF YOU COULD AT LEAST TAKE A LOOK...
YES, I UNDERSTAND YOUR WISH TO TRANSFER INTO THE EVENTS PLANNING
...AND I ALSO KNOW OF ALL YOUR HARD WORK IN YOUR CURRENT DEPARTMENT.
ANYWAY...
I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS.
THWAP
WITHOUT EVEN A GLANCE, MY PLANS WERE SHOVED BACK IN MY FACE LIKE WORTHLESS PIECES OF PAPER
ALL I WANTED,
...WAS TO TRY TO GET JUST ONE STEP CLOSER TO DOING WHAT I LOVE...
STOP IT.. DON'T CRY...
RUSTLE

WHISH
YOU'RE ALIVE..
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WHAT THE -?!
ARE YOU OKAY? CAN YOU STAND UP? NEED A HAND?
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE! I'M SO GLAD!

...OH, SORRY.
I WAS SO HAPPY I FINALLY RAN INTO SOMEONE THAT I -
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU?!
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
HE'S LOST?!
THERE'S NO ONE AROUND TO ASK FOR DIRECTIONS THIS LATE.. WHERE'RE ALL THE POLICE BOOTHS.
AND CONVENIENCE STORES WHEN YOU NEED THEM, HUH?
UMM...
COULD YOU..?
OH, GREAT! THANKS!
WHERE DO YOU NEED TO GO?
OH WELL.. HE'S DISTRACTED ME FROM MY PROBLEMS AND SOBERED ME UP
GLOW

UM, IF I COULD GET TO AOBAKE ROAD I THINK I COULD FIND MY WAY FROM THERE.
...
...UM?
HUH
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? ARE YOU ACTUALLY ILL OR SOMETHING?!
I-I'M FINE!
HUSH
HE MADE SUCH A STUPID FACE THAT I COULDN'T HELP STARING.
REMIND ME TO BE NICE BACK AT MY PARENTS?
HOLD ON. I'LL DRAW YOU A MAP.
HERE.
YOU CAN GET BACK HOME WITH THIS, RIGHT?
GUESS I WON'T NEED THIS ANY-MORE ...

BYE.
WOW, THANKS!
WAIT UP!
LEND ME YOUR PEN!
WHAT ARE YOU...?!
THIS IS MY THANKS!
IF YOU GO THIS WAY, LIKE THIS,
?
?!

SEE YA.
WE'VE GOT A LITTLE SHOP THERE. DROP BY, AND IT'LL BE ON ME!
OH. UH.
THIS WORTHLESS SCRAP OF PAPER...
I DREW HIS MAP ON MY PLANS BECAUSE I WANTED TO GET RID OF IT...
SHINJUKU
GINZA
THIS CAKE SHOP
HARAJUKU

. WAS IT AT LEAST GOOD FOR SOMETHING IN THE END?
ASADA-KUN,
COULD YOU HELP US?

...A TROUBLING CLIENT?
NO..
WE WANT YOU TO CHASE HIM AWAY!
YES?
UNDERSTOOD...
A LADY SHOULDN'T SAY "CRAP"...
WE WANT YOU TO GET HIM OUT BEFORE HE CRAPS!
A PIGEON
COO
I WAS ASKED FOR DIRECTIONS WITH SUCH BAD TIMING THAT OTHER TIME, TOO...
HAHAHA
DO I REALLY SEEM SO HANDY?
THERE IT IS!
ONODERA-SAN IS BETTER AT THIS KIND OF STUFF THAN I AM..
IT'S IN THE ELEVATOR HALLWAY
I'M ALWAYS BEING ASKED TO DO MENIAL STUFF LIKE THIS..

ONE PIGEON CHASE LATER...
SWEETS FAIR
OH, THAT'S RIGHT... WE'RE DOING THIS SPECIAL EVENT SOON.
IT'S ALWAYS PRETTY POPULAR.
WONDER HOW IT'LL BE THIS YEAR?
HMM
THE FEATURED PATISSIER IS PRETTY OLD-HAT. THERE'S NOTHING FRESH AND INTERESTING ABOUT HIM.
THE OTHER PARTICIPATING SHOPS ARE ALL SKEWED TOWARD SIMILAR TASTES AS WELL...
FORGET IT.
IF ONLY I'D BEEN IN CHARGE—
IT'S NO USE THINKING ABOUT IT.
CRINKLE

I FORGOT I LEFT THIS IN MY POCKET.
...
SHOULD I GIVE IT A VISIT?
STAR BAKERY
CLOSED TODAY

OH,
THE BUS IS HERE!
VRRRM
TAP
TAP
AND I HAD TO TRANSFER ALL THOSE BUSES TO GET HERE. I FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT!
I'M GOING HOME!
CLOSED?!
HUH?
OH!
ドキン
BA-THUMP!

H-
HEY!
IGNORING ME?!
SIR, ARE YOU GETTING ON?
N, NO- I'M NOT!
入口
ズキン
STAB
TAP
YO...
INGRATE!!
OH WELL..
SO WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW..?
GETS HIS WITS BACK
HE'S FAST..
..WHAT THE HELL AM I JOGGING AFTER HIM FOR?
HUFF
GASP
BAKERY

AND DOESN'T THE FACT THAT HE TOTALLY PASSED YOU BY MEAN THAT HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT YOU BY NOW?!
...
PUT YOURSELF IN HIS SHOES. WHY SHOULD HE BE BEHOLDEN TO SOMEONE WHOSE NAME HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW, WHO ONLY GAVE HIM STREET DIRECTIONS?!
WHY DID I COME HERE...?
HUH?
...AND JUST FELT AN OVERWHELMING URGE TO SEE HIM AGAIN.
HEY, AREN'T YOU...?
FINDING THAT SLIP OF PAPER, I SUDDENLY REMEMBERED HIS FACE...

FREEZE
THAT DRUNK GUY WHO WAS CRYING..?
TH-
THAT'S...
...OH.
YOU'RE SOMEONE ELSE? THEN PARDON ME, BUT WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?
DIREC-TIONS!
I GAVE YOU STREET DIRECTIONS! BUT YOU IGNORED ME EARLIER, DIDN'T YOU?!
HAHA.
OH, SO YOU CAME!
I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU EARLIER CUZ YOUR CLOTHES ARE DIFFERENT.
THAT'S THE PART YOU REMEMBER?!

SORRY WE'RE CLOSED TODAY...
BUT I FEEL BAD JUST TURNING YOU AWAY, SO,
COME ON IN. WE'VE GOT SOME CAKE FROM YESTERDAY, IF YOU DON'T MIND LEFTOVERS.
HEY! I'VE GOT A GUEST SO I'LL BE USING THE LIVING ROOM, OKAY?
WHAT'S WITH THIS HOUSE?
IT'S AN ELEC-TRONICS SHOP ...?
WE USED TO BE AN ELECTRONICS SHOP.
OH!
TH... THIS IS GETTING FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM MY ORIGINAL PLANS ..
STRANGE... I HADN'T PLANNED ON BEING INVITED IN TO HIS HOUSE LIKE THIS...
AH...
TYPICAL MOM!
MY DAD USED TO RUN IT, BUT THEN THIS HUGE MEGA-STORE OPENED UP ON THE MAIN STREET.
HAVE A SEAT. I'LL GET YOU SOME TEA.

AN AWARD...
IS IT HIS?
TWO-LEGGED WALKER DIVISION 2ND PLACE IWASAKI NAO
LOOK
HUH?!
ROBOT CONTEST, 2ND PLACE?!
I DON'T EVEN KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM.
PERCH...
IWASAKI NAO?
COULD IT BE.. HE'S PRETTY SMART?
IT'S ACTUALLY READ "SUNAO".
JUMP!
YIPE!
BUT EVERYONE CALLS ME NAO.
I BROUGHT ALL THE CAKES WE HAD LEFT.

I DON'T KNOW YOUR NAME YET!
WHAT IS IT?
I ENTERED THAT BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL. IT USED TO BE MY MAJOR.
THAT AWARD...!
CLINK
...OH
HOW STRANGE...
ITSUKI ASADA.
I WORK AT SHIKISHIMA DEPARTMENT STORE.
WOW, THAT'S GREAT!
OH, PLEASE, DIG IN
SO WHAT IS IT YOU DO, ASADA-SAN?
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE THIS GUY WHO ASKED ME FOR DIRECTIONS IS SO UNUSUALLY FRIENDLY, BUT. .
...IS THAT WHY THIS MEETING FEELS LIKE WHAT THEY CALL "FATE"?

I WILL. THANK YOU.
IT MAKES ME KINDA HAPPY...
...YOU CAN BE HONEST
SO HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?
THE CUSTARD IN THIS CHOUX IS GREAT!
IT LOOKS MISSHAPEN, BUT...
OH, I MADE THE CUSTARD.
N, NOT AT ALL!
MY DAD MAKES THEM... EVERYONE SAYS THEY TASTE AWFUL.
SIGH
TO BE HONEST, I THINK SO, TOO.
I MADE THAT, TOO
SO THAT CHOCOLATE'S NO GOOD... I THOUGHT SO.
IF YOU USED BETTER CHOCOLATE
DIFFERENT LIQUEUR, TOO
IT COULD BE MUCH BETTER
THIS GÂTEAU IS PRETTY GOOD, TOO!
IT'S A BIT COARSE, BUT...

THE DAY I MET YOU, ASADA-SAN..
HUH?
I'VE BEEN TO PASTRY-CHEF SCHOOL, BUT...
MY DAD HAD TOLD ME HE'D LEAVE THIS SHOP TO ME
BUT I WAS WORRIED WHETHER I COULD REALLY RUN THE PLACE.
OHHH...
I ALWAYS WONDERED WHY DAD CHOSE TO OPEN A CAKE SHOP.
HA HA
I'VE HEARD OF GETTING LOST IN THOUGHT, BUT THAT SEEMS A BIT EXCESSIVE...!
BUT IT'S PRETTY FAR FROM HERE TO THERE.
I WAS JOGGING, DEEP IN THOUGHT. AND I GOT LOST.
...
...IT WAS JUST YOUR FEET STICKING OUT OF SOME SHRUBS.
A PERSON!
AND JUST WHEN I FINALLY DID FIND SOMEONE...
THERE WASN'T ANYONE AROUND I COULD ASK FOR DIRECTIONS

I MADE MYSELF A WAGER. "IF THIS PERSON IS ALIVE, I'LL TAKE OVER THE STORE. IF HE'S DEAD, I WON'T."
HEY!!
DON'T PLAY WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE!
WAIT A SEC...
...BUT ODDS WERE MUCH GREATER I'D BE ALIVE. THE FACT YOU CHOSE THAT AS THE CONDITION FOR TAKING OVER...
DOESN'T THAT MEAN YOU'D PRETTY MUCH ALREADY DECIDED?
I SEE!
IT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS.
YOU'RE SMART, ASADA-SAN!
HAHA. I'M GLAD. I FEEL A BIT BETTER NOW.
YOU SEE, I FOUND YOU ALIVE, ASADA-SAN, BUT..

I WAS WORRIED BECAUSE YOU WERE CRYING.
BA-THUMP
W.. WAIT I'M SURE IT'S NOT ABOUT MY CRYING
HE MUST MEAN HE WAS "WORRIED" ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THE SHOP AFTER HE TOOK OVER...

SORRY I STAYED SO LONG.
NOT AT ALL. DROP BY ANY TIME.
NO, WHAT I REALLY MEAN TO SAY IS,
I WANT YOU TO COME BY AGAIN.
AFTER HAVING YOU TRY THE CAKES AND LISTENING TO YOUR CRITIQUE, I CAN TELL YOU HAVE A GOOD SENSE OF TASTE.
IF IT'S OKAY WITH YOU, I'D LIKE YOU TO HELP ME TO IMPROVE MY BAKING SKILLS.
HUH?

WHAT?
WHAT IS THIS?
WHAT IS THIS FLUTTERING IN MY HEART?!
HEY, ASADA.
YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING REAL CHIPPER LATELY
HAVE I?
MAYBE THIS IS WHAT THEY CALL A "SENSE OF PURPOSE"?
キュウン
ZING!
SURE... IF YOU THINK I'LL BE USEFUL...
I'VE FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THAT. EVERYTHING'S OKAY NOW.
OH, COME ON.
AND TO THINK, YOU WERE AT ROCK BOTTOM JUST A SHORT TIME AGO.

IT'S LIKE YOU'RE WALKING ON A CLOUD..
DID YA FIND YOURSELF A LOVER OR SOMETHING?
LOVER ..?!
OF COURSE NOT. NAO IS A MAN!
I'M HAVING SO MUCH FUN.
HAVING YOUR SKILLS ACKNOWLEDGED BY SOMEONE.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU! CHECK OUT THIS CONFITURE TODAY.
BESIDES, ISN'T THIS SOMETHING BETTER?

THIS IS A HAPPINESS I'VE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE
AND ANSWERING THAT TRUST,
BEING TRUSTED BY SOMEONE,

IF ONLY THIS WOULD LAST FOREVER.
TODAY, IT'S A CHIBOUST
HEY, DON'T TEST ME!
HAHA, SORRY. THIS IS THE REAL ONE.
THE ONE I MADE..
SO YOU CAN REALLY TELL, HUH? THAT'S FROM A MAGAZINE RECIPE
...IT TASTES.. KINDA ORDINARY..
YOU'RE MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN I THOUGHT, ASADA-SAN
...I FEEL THAT WAY, TOO.
I'M GLAD I MET YOU, NAO.
I'M LUCKY TO HAVE MET YOU.

TO BE HONEST, THERE WAS A LIMIT TO WHAT I COULD DO ALL ON MY OWN.
HAHAHA! THIS IS ALL KINDA EMBARRASSING!
YOU STARTED IT.
BRR!
BLUSH
BUT...
...NOW I'VE GOT TO THINK OF OTHER WAYS TO IMPROVE MY SKILLS.
YOU KNOW?
I'VE DECIDED TO GO STUDY FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS IN FRANCE.
OTHER...
...WAYS?

FRANCE...
I MEAN, I CAN'T BE RELYING ON YOU FOREVER, ASADA-SAN.
YEAH... I'VE GOT TO STUDY LOTS AND LOTS MORE.
...HEY, AREN'T YOU GOING TO EAT THAT CHIBOUST...?
ASADA-SAN?

NAO,
WILL NO LONGER NEED ME.
HAH
OH, UH.
YEAH..
NAO WILL BE LEAVING ME...?
...THE TARTNESS IS WELL-BALANCED
THIS TASTES THE BEST OUT OF EVERYTHING YOU'VE MADE SO FAR, NAO.
ALL RIGHT!
I JUST KNEW YOU'D LOVE THIS TASTE, ASADA-SAN.

...I LOVE -
YES.. I LOVE IT
JOLT
---WH-...
NAO...
WHAT?

IT CAN'T BE...?!
UH, NO...
IT'S NOTHING.
W-WHAT'S THE MATTER?!
IT'S ALL RIGHT!
IT'S NOTHING!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
BUT YOU DON'T LOOK SO...
STAY AWAY!
WHIRL

HOW CAN THIS BE...?!
REALLY... IT'S NOTHING...
WHAT SHOULD I DO...?
SINCE WHEN?
YOU HURT SOME-WHERE, RIGHT?!
IT'S NOT "NOTHING"!

SINCE WHEN HAVE I BEEN IN LOVE WITH NAO?
DON'T GO...

I THOUGHT YOU OF ALL PEOPLE WOULD SUPPORT ME ON THIS DECISION!!
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?!
!!
DON'T GO AWAY TO FRANCE!
HUH?
...HA HA...
WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?
SIGH

"BEING TOGETHER WITH YOU WAS FUN."
THAT'S ALL JUST YOUR OWN MISUNDER-STANDING.
ASADA-SAN, YOU...
"I'VE FALLEN IN LOVE WITH YOU."
"I DON'T WANT TO BE PARTED FROM YOU."
THEN WHAT WAS ALL OF THIS
WHAT WAS IT ALL FOR...?
NONE OF THAT HAS ANY MEANING FOR NAO.

I'M THE ONLY ONE SUFFERING.

...I'M BORED OF IT NOW.

STOMP
STOMP
HEY
HEY!
THE FEATURED PATISSIER FOR OUR SWEETS FAIR HAS BEEN HOSPITALIZED!
WHAAAT ?!
THE ADS HAVEN'T BEEN PRINTED YET, SO THEY WANT US TO MAKE A REVISION.
GUESS THE MAIN ATTRACTION WILL HAVE TO BE POST-PONED.
HMM... THEN WE'LL HAVE AN EMPTY BOOTH TO FILL. DO WE HAVE A REPLACEMENT?
WELL, WE DO HAVE THIS CANDIDATE.
THREE YEARS LATER,
AND I'VE MANAGED TO MAKE IT INTO THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION, JUST LIKE I ALWAYS WANTED.

I HAVEN'T SEEN NAO SINCE THAT TIME.
A RECENTLY OPENED STORE CALLED "POLAR STAR"... IT'S ALREADY RECEIVING GOOD BLOG REVIEWS. THEY'VE GOT A YOUNG PATISSIER NAMED -
NAO IWASAKI.
?!
SUNAO IWASAKI STUDIED IN FRANCE AT THE YOUNG AGE OF 22 TRAINED UNDER PIERRE JACMOND FOR THREE YEARS POLAR STAR
岩崎 直
Iwasaki sunao
弱冠22歳にして渡仏
ピエール・ジャックモンド
3年の修行の
ポーラスターで

LOVE SONG FOR THE MISERABLE CHAPTER 1 / END

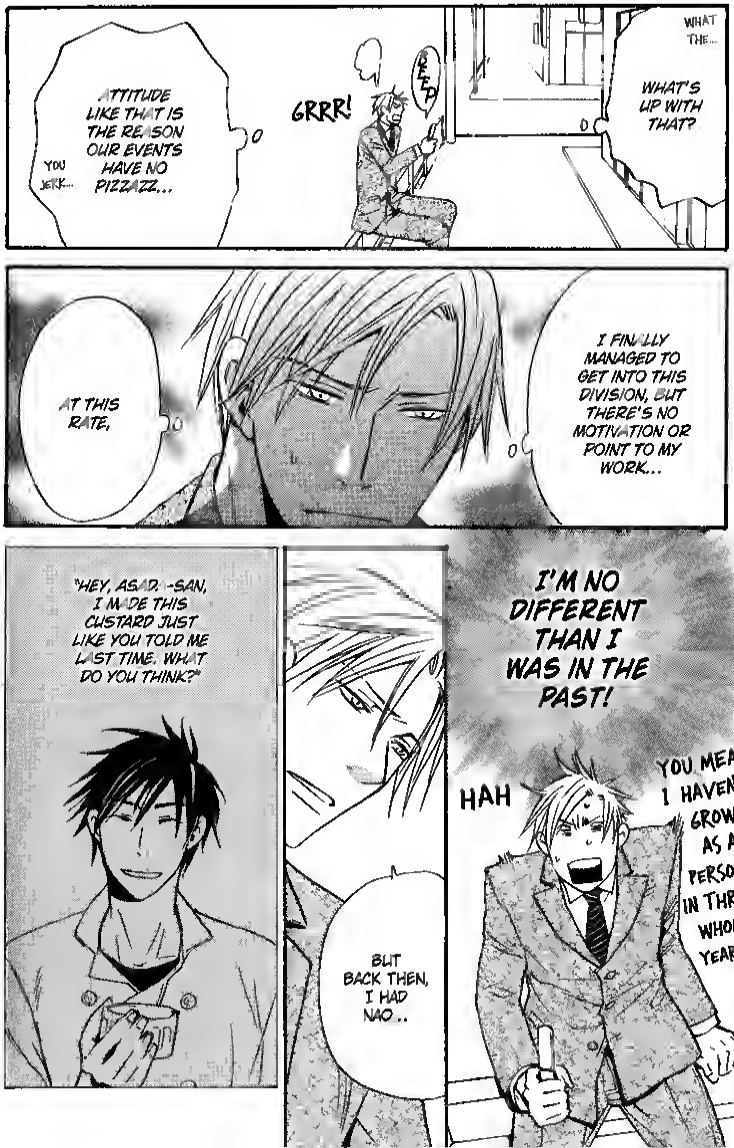
落ちぶれ紳士に
Love song for the miserable
愛の唄
CHAPTER 2

I AM ASADA, FROM THE SHIKISHIMA DEPARTMENT STORE'S EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION.
AS I MENTIONED WHEN I SPOKE WITH YOU YESTERDAY ON THE PHONE...
THIS,
...MUST BE WHAT THEY CALL KARMA...
...OR FATE...
...WE WOULD DEFINITELY LIKE YOU TO TAKE PART IN THE SWEETS FAIR OUR DEPARTMENT STORE IS HOSTING...
S...
...URK...

...TO SEE NAO AGAIN LIKE THIS, UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ...!
P... PLEASE .. TAKE IT...!
SILENCE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
NAO...!
MUMBLE...
... WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR?
...!
CRACK!
RUMBLE

I DON'T HAVE AN IDEA FOR THE NEXT NEW CAKE YET.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'D BE TROUBLED IF I CAN'T COME UP WITH ONE, RIGHT?
I'M GOING OUT FOR A RUN, MARIKO-SAN.
HEY!
NAO! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
HOLD ON A MINUTE.
...
NAO!
AND I DON'T FEEL LIKE BEING IN WHATEVER THING THAT PERSON THERE IS TALKING ABOUT, SO TURN HIM DOWN, OKAY? BYE.
PANG
PANG
PANG
IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS.
I WAS SORT OF EXPECTING SOMETHING LIKE THIS..
NO, NO. IT'S NOTHING, MS. NAKAGAMI
I... I'M SO SORRY. HE SEEMS TO BE..

CLIK
CLIK
OUR CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE CHANGED.
I WILL TRY BACK AT ANOTHER TIME.. PARDON ME
I'M NOW A MEMBER OF THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION, WHICH I WAS ONLY WISHING TO BE A PART OF BACK THEN. .
OH, CHIEF? THIS IS ASADA
..AND NAO, AFTER SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING HIS STUDIES IN FRANCE, HAS BECOME A WONDERFUL PATISSIER
OH..
YES, I WAS IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE AT "POLAR STAR" BUT .
..THERE'S JUST A BIT OF A PROBLEM WITH THE PATISSIER.
HM? THEY TURN YOU DOWN?
URK!
..UH, WELL...
HUH?!
IF YOU BROUGHT UP SHIKISHIMA DEPARTMENT STORE'S NAME AND HE STILL WOULDN'T ACCEPT, GIVE UP
BUT...!
JUST GO ON TO THE NEXT PLACE
YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIDE IT IN THIS BUSINESS. IT'S NOT UNUSUAL TO FIND CASES WHERE THE OWNER IS ENTHUSIASTIC EVEN THOUGH THE PATISSIER ISN'T


WHAT THE...
WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?
SLAP!
GRRR!
ATTITUDE LIKE THAT IS THE REASON OUR EVENTS HAVE NO PIZZAZZ...
YOU JERK...
I FINALLY MANAGED TO GET INTO THIS DIVISION, BUT THERE'S NO MOTIVATION OR POINT TO MY WORK...
AT THIS RATE,
"HEY, ASADA-SAN, I MADE THIS CUSTARD JUST LIKE YOU TOLD ME LAST TIME. WHAT DO YOU THINK?"
BUT BACK THEN, I HAD NAO...
I'M NO DIFFERENT THAN I WAS IN THE PAST!
HAH
YOU MEAN I HAVEN'T GROWN AS A PERSON IN THREE WHOLE YEARS?

"I FEEL LIKE I'M IMPROVING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS WITH ALL YOUR HELP."
"OH, COOL!"
"OH, WOW, IT'S GREAT! THE SMOOTH TEXTURE IS PERFECT!"
"YOU'RE REALLY GREAT, ASADA-SAN!"
AS FOR ME, I'D BEEN FEELING STUCK IN A DEAD-END AT WORK...
BUT AT THE TIME, NAO HAD ONLY JUST STARTED HIS PASTRY-MAKING..
I WISH I'D SAID THOSE SAME WORDS BACK TO NAO...
...AND IT WAS BY MERE CHANCE THAT I BECAME HIS TASTE-TESTER, HELPING HIM OUT IN HIS TRAINING
BUT HAVING NAO RELY ON ME CHEERED ME UP AND KEPT ME GOING
I CAN'T BELIEVE I STILL HAVE THIS THING..
IT'S FALLING APART BY NOW, BUT..

...OH,
MS. NAKAGAMI ...
YOU WERE JUST STANDING THERE FOR SO LONG, I WONDERED WHAT YOU WERE DOING...
YIKES!
HEY, YOU THERE!
JUMP!
DAH!

IT'S BECAUSE OF ME.

-SIGH- I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT BOY HAS AGAINST IT!
CLENCH
...UM, WELL, YOU SEE...

I'M SORRY FOR ALL THIS, WHEN YOU'VE TAKEN THE TROUBLE TO COME OUT HERE...
I'D LOVE FOR US TO PARTICIPATE, AS IT WOULD BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY, BUT...

WHEN HE LET GO OF MY HAND SO SUDDENLY, I PANICKED.
I DIDN'T WANT HIM TO GO TO FRANCE..
I DIDN'T WANT HIM TO LEAVE ME.
I FELT AS IF MY EXISTENCE WOULD BECOME VALUELESS.
HE'D BEEN LIKE A LITTLE BROTHER TO ME UP UNTIL THEN..
...SO I SUPPOSE I WAS FEELING LONELY AT THE THOUGHT THAT HE'D BE GONE.
SUCH CHILDISH POSSESSIVENESS?
NO. THE CONFLICT WAS ALL ON MY SIDE.
NAO'S ABSOLUTE FAITH IN ME WAS SO COMFORTING..
IN THE PAST... I SAID SOMETHING TERRIBLE TO HIM...
SO YOU KNEW EACH OTHER...
YOU FOUGHT?

WHEN YOU TRY TO CUT THINGS OFF WITH SOMEONE BY DELIBERATELY MAKING THEM HATE YOU...
AH, I THINK I CAN UNDERSTAND!
JOLT...
BUT FEELING AN EMOTION LIKE THAT FOR SOMEONE IS ALMOST AKIN TO LOVE, DON'T YOU THINK?
IT'S TRUE
BACK THEN,
I NEEDED NAO SO BADLY..
OH, BUT I'M NOT SAYING NAO AND I ARE IN THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP.
I'M MARRIED!
..AH..

DON'T USE THE FRONT ENTRANCE FOR COMING AND GOING.
DID YOU THINK OF A NEW RECIPE?
YOU SURE WERE GONE A LONG TIME
...THAT THE FEELING WAS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM LOVE
NOT YET..
SO... DID YOU TURN IT DOWN?
I'M BACK. .
WHAT?!
HE SAID HE'D COME AGAIN
YOU JUST FOCUS ON YOUR OWN JOB. THERE ARE ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT UNTIL THE NEW ITEM ANNOUNCEMENT DATE, YOU KNOW.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED. IT'S HIS JOB... EVEN IF YOU ARE AN AWKWARD CLIENT FOR HIM
IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT, I'LL CLOBBER YOU.
...YES.

LIKE I SAID, PLEASE LET ME CONTINUE NEGOTIATING WITH "POLAR STAR"!
WHAT DID YOU SAY, ASADA?!
BUT IT SEEMS THEY HAVE SEVERAL MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS COMING UP AS WELL. I'M SURE THAT STORE WILL BE A BIG HIT!
LEADING MAGAZINES, TOO.
HM?
I APOLOGIZE FOR BEING SO WILLFUL.
BUT I TOLD YOU YESTERDAY, DIDN'T I, TO GO ON TO THE NEXT STORE!
ABOVE ALL, THEIR CAKES ARE DELICIOUS..
WHO?! WHO SAID THAT?!
HUH?!
IF WE INVITE THEM AT NEXT YEAR'S FAIR, AFTER THEY'VE ALREADY BECOME POPULAR...
...PEOPLE WILL CALL US THE "BORING OLD FAIR THAT ONLY SHOWCASES THE SAME, TIRED STUFF" AGAIN.
OF COURSE IT'S ONLY A RUMOR, BUT...!

I'M SURE YOU UNDERSTAND, CHIEF!
AND FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, WE NEED THE PARTICIPATION OF THAT STORE!
AS I SAID BEFORE, I JUST WANT THIS FAIR TO BE SUCCESSFUL!
N... NOT AT ALL!
OKAY, OKAY, FINE! DO WHAT YOU WANT!
HAVE YOU... GOT SOME KIND OF PERSONAL STAKE IN THIS?
HM?
...IT'S NO GOOD.
GOING FOR A RUN AGAIN?
YEAH. I'LL BE BACK.
TAKE YOU CELL PHONE IN CASE YOU GET LOST AGAIN, OKAY?

...OH...
NNGH.
HEY!
HMPH
DASH
NAO, WAIT!
AT LEAST LET ME TALK TO YOU!

HALT
SO LISTEN!!
YOU ASKED ME WHAT I CAME HERE FOR!
I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO SEE MY FACE, NAO...
AND I WOULDN'T BE DOING THIS EITHER IF IT WEREN'T MY JOB.
PANG...
... DON'T ACT SO BIG
BESIDES, ANYTHING YOU SAY TO ME AT THIS POINT WILL JUST PISS ME OFF
I'D LIKE IT TO BE A SUCCESS
AND PLANNING THIS FAIR IS MY FIRST ASSIGNMENT
I'M... FINALLY DOING THE JOB I WANTED BACK THEN

AND FOR THAT, I NEED YOUR HELP, NAO...!
...SO,
YOU WANT ME TO MAKE STUFF TAILORED TO YOUR TASTES AGAIN, IS THAT IT?
YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME
NO, THAT'S NOT IT...
YESTERDAY, I TASTED ALL OF NAO'S CAKES
THERE WAS NO TRACE OF THE PAST,
IN THE ELEGANT, BEAUTIFUL TASTES.
THEN WHAT? IS THIS OFFER SUPPOSED TO MAKE SOME SORT OF AMENDS FOR THE HORRIBLE THING YOU SAID TO ME?
AFTER ALL, THAT DEPARTMENT STORE OF YOURS IS PRETTY FAMOUS

IT'S NOT MY INTENTION TO HAVE YOU FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT I SAID.
IT ONLY SERVED TO CONVINCE ME THAT I WAS RIGHT TO LET GO OF NAO'S HAND
I'M ONLY DOING MY JOB
SO...
JAK
THAT INCIDENT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS
FORGET IT. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE
TAP

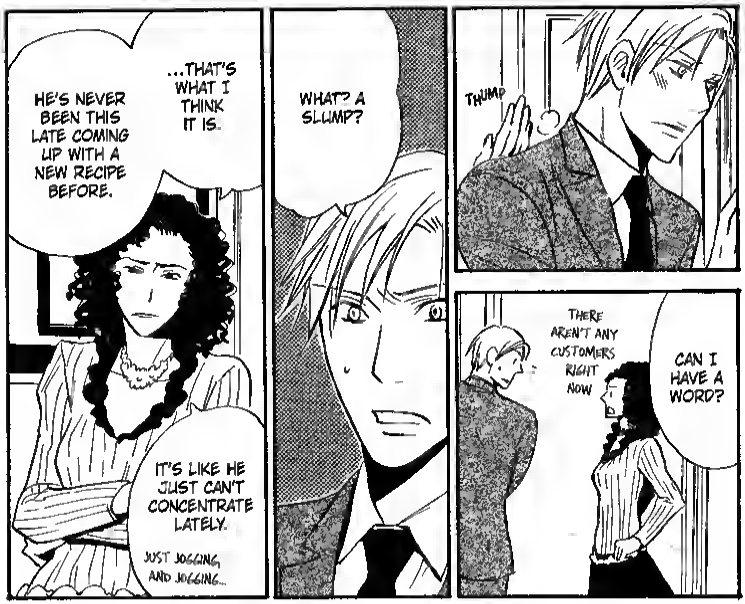
WAI...!
DASH
I COULDN'T CATCH UP TO HIM... AGAIN...

EVEN ON THE FIRST DAY THAT I MET NAO
I RAN CHASING AFTER HIM
...BUT I SUPPOSE THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE ACTIVELY "GOT AWAY"..
BACK THEN,
ALL I EVER DO...
...IS CHASE AFTER HIM.
IS IT REALLY WORTH DISOBEYING MY SUPERIOR FOR...?
WHY AM I SO HUNG UP ON THIS?
IF I FAIL, I MIGHT BE TRANSFERRED AGAIN TO A DIFFERENT PLACE...
HE GREETED ME WITH A SMILE

I SHOULD HAVE GRACIOUSLY SENT HIM OFF AND WISHED HIM LUCK...
I'M THE ONE WHO ENDED IT.
"DON'T GO AWAY TO FRANCE!"
WHY DID I SAY SUCH A THING...?
IF I HAD ONLY DONE THAT,
WHAT'S THE POINT?
...HE MIGHT HAVE STILL GREETED ME WITH A SMILE...
HAHA...
TALK ABOUT MIXING PERSONAL LIFE WITH BUSINESS...
I GUESS I JUST WANT TO HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH NAO...

OH, ASADA-KUN!
YOU'RE EARLY TODAY
THIS IS THE WORST...
NO, NO, MS. NAKAGAMI
I'LL SEE THIS THROUGH TO THE END.
THAT BOY IS SO STUBBORN
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT ME TO PUT IN A WORD, TOO?
MAY I TAKE A LOOK?
IS HE IN THE KITCHEN NOW?
YUP.
HE'LL BE FREE IN A LITTLE WHILE

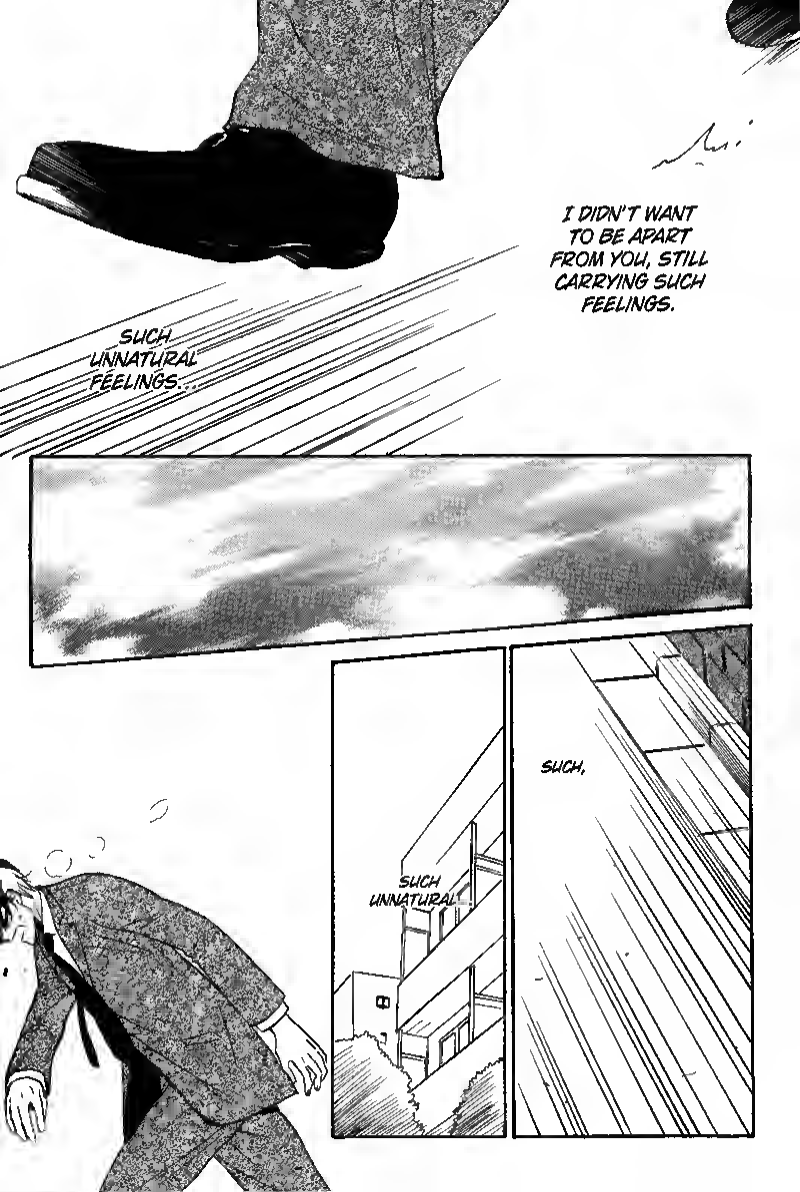
IT'S GREAT.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN HIM ACTUALLY MAKING SOMETHING ...
WOW...


HE'S NEVER BEEN THIS LATE COMING UP WITH A NEW RECIPE BEFORE.
...THAT'S WHAT I THINK IT IS.
IT'S LIKE HE JUST CAN'T CONCENTRATE LATELY.
JUST JOGGING, AND JOGGING...
WHAT? A SLUMP?
THUMP
THERE AREN'T ANY CUSTOMERS RIGHT NOW
CAN I HAVE A WORD?

KCHAK
OH.
NAO
WOULD IT BE BETTER IF I DIDN'T COME HERE ANYMORE?
COULD IT BE... MY FAULT?!
TH... THEN...
HAH
..
..I'M GOING OUT FOR A BIT, MARIKO-SAN
SHFF
...THAT'D BE GREAT.
BUMP

WHIRL
NA...
STOP
GRIT
BUT THAT'S
YOU'RE A LIAR, ASADA-SAN.

NO!
IT COULDN'T BE HELPED...!
...!
OH
WAIT...
THE FEELINGS I BECAME AWARE OF THAT DAY...


I DIDN'T WANT TO BE APART FROM YOU, STILL CARRYING SUCH FEELINGS.
SUCH UNNATURAL FEELINGS...
SUCH,
SUCH UNNATURAL...

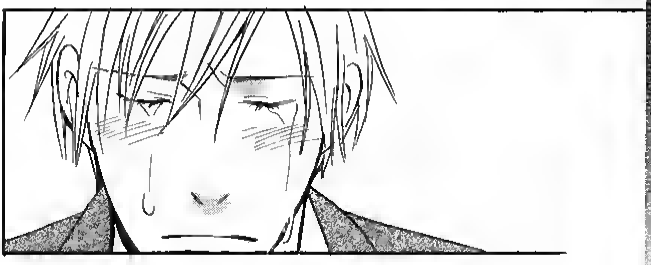
HAH
HAH
KOFF
WEEZE
THUD!
BUCKLE

DID YOU GET BORED AGAIN?
...WHY ARE YOU RUNNING?
NAO, I'M SORRY..
I...
I...
FOR WHAT I DID TO YOU ..
I'M SORRY..

I'M SORRY, TOO.
I WAS BEING STUBBORN.
THE WHOLE TIME I WAS STUDYING, ALL I WANTED WAS TO GET BACK AT YOU.
SO WHEN THE OFFER FROM SHIKISHIMA CAME, I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY DONE THAT.
WHEN YOU CAME TO THE STORE, ASADA-SAN... I THOUGHT I'D BE ABLE TO HEAR YOU SAY, "I'M SORRY."
BUT INSTEAD, YOU SAID, "NICE TO MEET YOU," AS IF WE WERE TOTAL STRANGERS.

..BUT IT DIDN'T MAKE ME FEEL ANY BETTER.
I WAS SO ANGRY... THAT'S WHY I ACTED SO MEAN TOWARDS YOU..
I WANT TO BE SMILING WHEN I'M WITH YOU..
...JUST LIKE IN THE PAST.

HUFF—
IF...
FULFILLING DAYS OF TRUST,
AND HAPPINESS...
WILL THOSE DAYS RETURN AGAIN?
...CAN YOU STAND?
...IF I TAKE NAO'S HAND...



"BUT ALSO INFUSED WITH PAIN."

A LOVE SONG FOR THE MISERABLE: CHAPTER 2 / END

COME IN, ASADA-KUN
NAO IS WAITING
THUMP
GOOD EVENING.
落ちぶれ紳士に
愛の目
ALTHOUGH HE'S TUCKERED OUT AND HAVING A NAP RIGHT NOW...

CHAPTER 3

落ちぶれ紳士に愛の唄

Love song for the miserable

SINCE NAO AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR FAIR, YOU HAVEN'T COME BY ONCE UNTIL I CALLED.
HAVE YOU BEEN BUSY ASADA-KUN?
I APOLOGIZE! YES, I'VE BEEN A BIT SWAMPED AT WORK AND,
...OH, IS THIS THE NEW ITEM? SO HE MADE IT ON TIME!
...WELL, THAT'S MY EXCUSE ANYWAY.
KCHAK
OH, NAO, ARE YOU AWAKE?
MM...
JUMP
I WAS ALSO WORRIED THAT MY VISITS WOULD INTERFERE WITH NAO'S CONCENTRATION IN DEVELOPING THIS...
ONLY JUST! IT WAS COMPLETED THIS MORNING BARELY UNDER THE WIRE

WOBBLE
BECAUSE,
WOBBLE
I'VE REALIZED,
ASADA-SAN...
YOU MUST BE TIRED... NAO...
I HEARD YOU PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER?
THE REAL REASON IS THAT I'VE BEEN A BIT EMBARRASSED SEEING NAO AGAIN
ACTUALLY, "SCARED" MIGHT BE MORE LIKE IT
WHAT?!
PIS-TACHIO.
WH-...
?!
WHAT IS IT?!
COFFEE BISCUIT..
?!
SALT..
.I'M IN LOVE WITH NAO.
CREAK

STARE
WELL, I'LL DIG IN.
...DON'T STARE SO MUCH!
IF YOU'RE THAT SLEEPY, YOU SHOULD'VE KEPT NAPPING..
A GLACAGE OF COFFEE AND CAR MEL OVER A PISTACHIO MOUS ON A COFFEE BISCUIT BASE, GARNISHED WITH SALTED ALMOND
...ARE YOU TRYING TO EXPL IN YOUR NEW RECIPE?
NOD NOD
IF YOU ASK ME... WHAT IT IS I'M SCARED OF,
O...
OH, OKAY..
I WANT TO SEE YOU TASTE IT, ASADA-SAN
IT'S THAT I MIGHT LET SOME LITTL THING GO TO MY HEAD
AND DO SOMETHING FOOLISH, CAUSING NAO TO THINK I'M STRANGE
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ACT WITH HIM..
I'VE GOT TO KEEP CALM...
..WELL, THEN,

YES?
MS. NAKAGAMI.
OHOHO... YES, LET'S ..
OH COME ON, I WAS ONLY TESTING THE WATERS...
APART FROM EQUIPMENT AND SALES STAFF, WE CANNOT PROVIDE FOR PACKAGING AND STICKER EXPENSES AS WELL. AS FOR YOUR ASKING PROFIT RATE OF 30%, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. LOOK AT IT FROM OUR
ROAARR
LET'S DISCUSS OUR DIFFERENCES CONCERNING THE TERMS OF CONTRACT...
THEN THAT'S NAO'S DEPARTMENT. GOOD LUCK!
FLINCH!
YES.
IT CAN MERELY BE A VARIATION ON ONE OF YOUR REGULAR ITEMS...
-SIGH- BEING IN THIS FAIR IS MORE COMPLICATED THAN I THOUGHT
AND YOU SAY YOU NEED US TO PRESENT A LIMITED-EDITION FAIR-ONLY ITEM?

I'VE HEARD THAT NAO'S BEEN IN A CREATIVE SLUMP LATELY.
BUT TIME IS RUNNING OUT.
SORRY ABOUT THIS .. JUST WHEN YOU'RE RECOVERING FROM ONE ALL-NIGHTER ALREADY...
HUP
...I'M FINE.
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT WAS DUE TO MY SHOWING UP.
BUT I LATER LEARNED THAT IT HAD STARTED EVEN EARLIER, AND THE REASON FOR IT WAS UNKNOWN.
I'D LIKE HIM TO ESCAPE FROM SUCH MISERY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
THANK YOU.
I HAVE TO MAKE SURE YOUR FIRST ASSIGNMENT IS A SUCCESS, ASADA-SAN.

HEY, ASADA.
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS?
GOURMET PUR
IF I COULD HELP HIM, I WOULD...
?
LOOK, IT'S GOT A PREVIEW OF OUR SWEETS FAIR...
AND THAT STORE YOU LOVE IS MENTIONED.
OH... WOW!
CHIEF...
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD COMMEND YOU, HUM?
FIVE STARS...
YOU SEEMED SO STRESSED DURING NEGOTIATIONS, I GOT WORRIED... SORRY I YELLED AT YOU.
BLUSH
WELL, THAT WAS FOR A DIFFERENT REASON BUT...

I SEEM TO RECALL HAVING HEARD THIS BEFORE ...!
NO...!
YOU GETTING SOME?
BUT LATELY YOU SEEM ELATED.
EH?
I FELT SHOCKED TO THE POINT OF TEARS THE MOMENT I REALIZED I WAS IN LOVE WITH NAO
BUT NOW, I'M ELATED TO THE POINT WHERE OTHERS CAN SENSE IT..
I'VE GOT TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER.
DON'T CRY.
ASADA-SAN.
LET'S BE FRIENDS AGAIN.

HAHAHA THAT'S BET-TER
I-I'M OLDER THAN YOU. DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A CHILD!
LET'S MAKE UP
SQUEEZE
NOW, YOU'RE BACK TO THE OLD ASADA-SAN I USED TO KNOW
...
I WANT THINGS TO STAY JUST THE WAY THEY ARE RIGHT NOW.
IT'S ONLY PAINFUL WHEN I THINK OF THE FUTURE.

HUH?
ASADA-SAN!
WHAT'S UP? YOU WERE JUST HERE RECENTLY.
WERE YOU JUST ABOUT TO GO JOGGING?
ピピピ
YEAH, BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, I'LL PUT IT OFF UNTIL LATER
...ARE YOU STILL HAVING TROUBLE COMING UP WITH THAT LIMITED ITEM FOR OUR FAIR?
YEAH, A LITTLE.
I ALSO HAVE A WEDDING CAKE REQUESTED FOR NEXT MONTH, SO THERE'S THAT, TOO..
WOW.. YOU'RE BUSY, HUH?
MARIKO-SAN, ASADA-SAN'S HERE!

OH MY!
FIVE STARS? THAT'S WONDERFUL!
GOURMET
PUR
LET'S SEE... "AS BEFITTING SUCH A YOUNG CHEF, HIS WORKS ARE ORIGINAL YET DELICATE... (ETC.)
HIS ARTISTIC DECORATIONS CONVEY A SHARP, CLEAN IMAGE, APPEALING TO THE MATURE, ADULT WOMAN... (ETC.)" LISTEN TO THAT!
I WONDER WHAT THEY'D DO IF THEY KNEW THIS SAME CHEF HANGS AROUND WEARING SWEATS ALL THE TIME?
...
I BROUGHT IT OVER, THINKING THAT SUCH HOPEFUL PRAISE MIGHT HEIGHTEN HIS MOTIVATION BUT...
AREN'T YOU HAPPY?
ARTICLES LIKE THIS
NAO..?
NOT SO MUCH HAPPY..
...AS WONDERING WHETHER THAT'S THE DIRECTION MY WORK NEEDS TO GO TO BE ACCEPTED AFTER ALL...

WHEN YOU TASTED MY CAKE LAST TIME, YOU MADE A FUNNY FACE.
HEY, ASADA-SAN.
I MEAN, THEY'RE PRAISING YOU ..
BUT IT'S GOOD, ISN'T IT?
..WHAT?
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU THEY ALL CAME FROM MY FEELINGS OF ANGER TOWARD YOU. WOULD YOU STILL THINK THE SAME THING?
THAT'S ONLY YOUR IMAGINA-TION!
IT WAS BECAUSE YOU WERE STARING AT ME ..!
BUT...
BESIDES, IT'S NOT JUST YOUR NEW RECIPE. I THINK ALL YOUR CAKES ARE GOOD...

"THE WHOLE TIME I WAS STUDYING, ALL I WANTED WAS TO GET BACK AT YOU."
JOLT...
FEELINGS OF ANGER...
...TOWARD ME?
SORRY FOR DREDGING THE WHOLE THING BACK UP AGAIN.
OH,
I'LL JUST HEAD HOME FROM THERE, SO... SEE YA.
WELL, I'M GONNA GO TAKE MY JOG
WAIT.. DOESN'T THAT MEAN I'M THE REASON..
..FOR NAO'S SLUMP?!

...I'LL JOG, TOO!
ASADA-SAN?
OH, IT STARTED RAIN-ING.
NAO!
NEVER MIND, LET'S GO!
PASH
WHAT FOR...?
IT'S MY FAULT YOU'RE SO TROUBLED THAT YOU HAVE TO JOG LIKE THIS...!
AND IF YOU DON'T STRETCH FIRST, YOU'LL PULL A LEG MUSCLE..
ASADA-SAN... YOU'RE GONNA LOSE YOUR SHOES AGAIN.
...AND YOU'RE WEARING A SUIT..
...AND IT'S RAINING.
NO WONDER THERE'S NO TRACE OF THE PAST IN THE SHAPE AND TASTE OF HIS CAKES.

HIS CREATIONS BECAME WHAT THEY ARE TODAY ALL FROM AN ATTEMPT TO REFLITE THE PAST HE HAD WITH ME!
WHETHER YOUR WORK COMES FROM ANGER OR SOMETHING ELSE, THE WORLD IS PRAISING AND ACKNOWLEDGING YOU!
BE PROUD OF THAT!
JUST LET ME SAY ONE THING!

IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR STYLE, GO AHEAD!
AS LONG AS YOU TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR OWN WORK, NO ONE WILL COMPLAIN!

I MEANT "THEM"! OR AT LEAST..
I...
A... AS A FRIEND, YOU KNOW?
WHSH
AND BESIDES...
NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF CAKES YOU MAKE, I'LL STILL LOVE YOU
HALT
...OKAY.

THANK YOU, ASADA-SAN
THE PLACE IS SMALL, SO IT SHOULD HEAT UP PRETTY QUICKLY
PLEASE HAVE A SHOWER WHILE THE ROOM'S WARMING.
TH-THANKS.
FWSH
HEY, ASADA-SAN, G'IMME YOUR SHIRT.
I'VE GOT A DRYER LET'S THROW IT IN THERE.
BFET!
I'M IN NAO'S HOUSE.
OGLE
OGLE
SO HE'S LIVING ON HIS OWN NOW..

WHOA!
UH, YEAH, OKAY!
WHAT'S WRONG?
THAT WAS BAD FOR MY HEART...
I HAVE TO ADMIT, I'M ACTING STRANGER AND STRANGER.
-SIGH-
SPLOOSH
ドボボボ

THINKING A SLEEPING MAN'S FACE CUTE.
OR FEELING EXCITED AT SEEING HIM UNDRESSED...

WHAT IF, ONE DAY, THESE FEELINGS SHOULD EXPLODE...?
I EVEN BLURTED OUT ACCIDENTALLY THAT I LOVE HIM JUST A MOMENT AGO..
THAT WAS JUST TOO CLOSE...
BUT EVEN IF I TOLD HIM HOW I REALLY FEEL, NAO WOULD PROBABLY JUST LAUGH IT OFF.
THANK YOU.
BUT I CAN'T GO OUT WITH YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE A MAN.
I'M SORRY, ASADA-SAN.
LET'S STAY FRIENDS
RATHER THAN FACE THAT SORT OF FINAL REJECTION
I'D PREFER HAVING HIM HATE ME AND PARTING WITH HIM AGAIN, LIKE BEFORE
PLOP

NAO, I'M DONE. IT'S YOUR TURN..
HUH?
SOMETHING FELL
OH, HEY, ASADA-SAN, ISN'T THIS..
...THE MAP I GAVE YOU WHEN WE FIRST MET?
FLAP
.....!
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE JUST FORGOTTEN IT IN YOUR POCKET SINCE THEN... HAVE YOU?
CUZ YOU'RE USUALLY SO TIDY.
CULT FIGHTER+

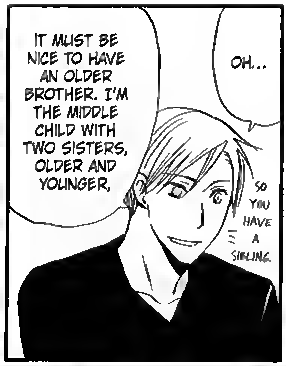
..OOPS
NEVER MIND! GO AND TAKE YOUR BATH!
CULT FIGHTER+
I... IT'S LIKE A GOOD-LUCK CHARM.
SORRY. THIS MUST ALL SOUND CREEPY TO YOU.
CRUMPLE
I'LL GET RID OF IT.
WHENEVER I'M STUCK AT WORK, I LOOK AT IT...
...AND I FEEL REASSURED

CULT
FIGH
TER+
DON'T THROW IT AWAY...
I...
NAO...?

JUMP!
=ACHOO!=
HURRY AND TAKE YOUR BATH!
HA HA
OKAY.
CULT FIGHTER
THUNK
WHAT WAS THAT..?
FLOP
JUST NOW..
WHAT WAS HE ABOUT TO SAY?
BA-THUMP
BA-THUMP

STEAM
STEAM
HERE'S YOUR SHIRT.
HM?
...
IT'S ALL RIGHT. AS LONG AS IT'S DRY.
SORRY I DON'T HAVE AN IRON
WE CLOSED THAT UP AND SOLD THE PROPERTY.
AND YOUR PARENTS?
THEY WENT TO LIVE WITH MY OLDER BROTHER
UMM... WELL...
I CAN'T ASK HIM...
CULT FIGHTER
WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT HOUSE IN THE OLD SHOPPING DISTRICT?
SO SINCE WHEN HAVE YOU LIVED ON YOUR OWN?

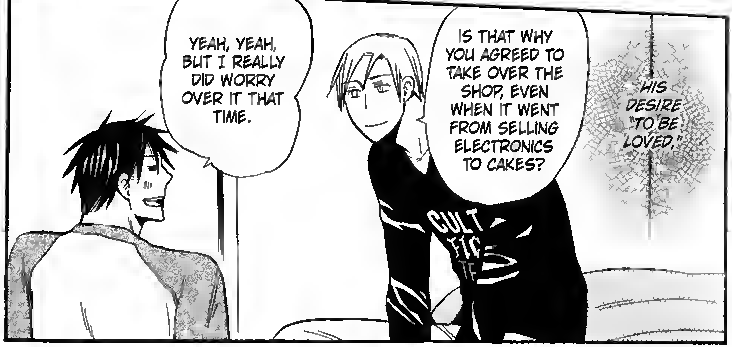
IT MIGHT'VE BEEN NICE,
...IF WE'D GOTTEN ALONG


IT MUST BE NICE TO HAVE AN OLDER BROTHER. I'M THE MIDDLE CHILD WITH TWO SISTERS, OLDER AND YOUNGER.
OH...
SO YOU HAVE A SIBLING.

I CAN SEE THAT NOW, OF COURSE, BUT AT THE TIME I THOUGHT THEY WERE PLAYING FAVORITES...
MY BROTHER IS FROM A FORMER MARRIAGE, SO MY PARENTS PROBABLY WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO MAKE HIM FEEL AT HOME...
I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT, QUITE SENSELESSLY, THAT NAO HAD BEEN RAISED WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD.

WE'RE ONLY HALF-RELATED.
!
NAO'S TELLING ME ABOUT HIS FAMILY.
HE'S MUCH OLDER... AND REALLY SMART.
EVER SINCE WE WERE LITTLE, I WAS ALWAYS BEING COMPARED TO HIM...
Y'KNOW?

I'D TRY SO HARD TO GET MY PARENTS' ATTENTION...
AND, LIKE—
THAT TRAIT IS STILL WITH ME TO THIS DAY.
MAYBE THIS IS WHERE N.O.'S AGGRESSIVE FRIENDLINESS SPRINGS FROM.


IS THAT WHY YOU AGREED TO TAKE OVER THE SHOP, EVEN WHEN IT WENT FROM SELLING ELECTRONICS TO CAKES?
HIS DESIRE "TO BE LOVED."
YEAH, YEAH, BUT I REALLY DID WORRY OVER IT THAT TIME.

AND THEN,

THAT'S WHEN..
...I MET YOU, ASADA-SAN.

I GET COURAGE FROM YOU, TOO, ASADA-SAN.
ASADA-SAN.
THE RAIN... IT'S STOPPED.
I'M THE SAME WAY.
SO PLEASE,
DON'T THROW THAT MAP AWAY.

OKAY.
I WON'T...
PAT
I WON'T THROW IT AWAY.
SO LET'S BOTH TRY OUR BEST.

O... OH, YEAH!
THE FAIR! FOR SHIKISHIMA!
THERE'S LESS THAN A WEEK LEFT, GOT IT?!
...WHAT?
FOR WHAT?
SNAP!
YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR SLUMP BY NOW, RIGHT?
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT SPECIAL ITEM OF YOURS!
PFFT!
SEE YA.

H... UH?
BA- THUMP
BA- THUMP
BA- THUMP
WHAT IS THIS?

LET'S SEE.. I'VE FINISHED CHECKING OVER THE DELIVERIES OF THE MATERIALS...
PIP
HMM...
HAS THIS DIVISION ALWAYS BEEN SO IDLE?
BUT SHOULDN'T WE BE PLANNING OUR NEXT EVENT?
CHK
I GUESS THERE'S NOTHING ELSE LEFT TO DO...
WHY DID I HAVE TO GO AND DO THAT?
I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF FROM PATTING HIS HEAD...
BUT THAT'S STILL CONSIDERED IN THE REALM OF FRIENDSHIP, ISN'T IT..?
YEAH, I'M SURE IT IS.
I THINK.
WHEN I'M BORED, I THINK TOO MUCH...
CREAK

NO, THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY.
ARE WE FINALLY GOING TO START PLANNING FOR OUR NEXT EVENT?
MEETING EVERYONE GATHER IN THE MEETING ROOM.
THERE ARE TOO MANY THINGS I "CAN'T HELP MYSELF" FROM DOING THESE DAYS!
I KNOW HOW BADLY YOU WANTED TO COME WORK IN THIS DIVISION.
IT MUST BE DISAPPOINTING FOR YOU WHEN YOU'VE ONLY JUST JOINED
WHAT ...?!
IT'S BEEN DECIDED AT THE DIRECTORS' MEETING THAT EVENTS ARE TO BE OUTSOURCED FROM NOW ON
OUR DIVISION'S BEING SHUT DOWN
WHAT'LL YOU DO WILL YOU QUIT THE COMPANY?
NAH, JUST KIDDING.

I'M OHKI, FROM CAFÉ MODE MONTHLY
WOW!
I'M SO DELIGHTED! I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE SO YOUNG AND HANDSOME, CHEF IWASAKI!
YOU'RE KIDDING ME...
YOUR CAKES ARE A FAVORITE OF OUR EDITORIAL OFFICE!
SURE..
THEN MAY I START THE INTERVIEW WITHOUT DELAY?

A LOVE SONG FOR THE MISERABLE CHAPTER 3 / END

落ちぶれ紳士に
Love song for the miserable
愛の唄
CHAPTER 4

- ASADA!
THE MEETING'S OVER!
RUFFLE RUFFLE
RUSTLE
YOU A SMOKER?
WANT ONE?
OH, OKAY.
NO..
YOU KNEW ABOUT THIS.. DIDN'T YOU, CHIEF?

I'M NOT ANGRY..
AND I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW YOU'D BE ANGRY ABOUT THIS, ASADA.
BUT I DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE DECIDED THIS SUDDENLY.
...WELL, YEAH...
I WAS SURPRISED, BUT... IF IT'S POLICY, IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
WHEN I WAS CHOSEN FOR TRANSFER INTO THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION. .
BUT IN REALITY, AS MEMBERS OF THE DIVISION WHO LEARNED ABOUT THE JOB CUTBACK JUMPED SHIP, THERE WAS A LACK OF WORKERS TO KEEP THINGS RUNNING IN THE INTERIM DURING THE TRANSITION TO OUTSOURCING..
..AND I HAD ONLY BEEN CHOSEN AS A STOP-GAP EMPLOYEE
.. I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE MY EFFORTS AND ABILITY HAD FINALLY BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED.
GRIP
I'M...
...JUST FINE.

DON'T GET TOO DEPRESSED, YOU HEAR?
THUMP
AND DON'T QUIT EITHER, ALL RIGHT?
THEY'VE GOT BIG HOPES FOR YOU.
HOPES?
WHAT A JOKE.
THEN WHY...
DAMMIT...!
THIS ISN'T FAIR!

UMM,
YOU HAVE QUITE AN UNUSUAL JOB HISTORY, CHEF IWASAKI. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A PATISSIER?
MY PA-
OH, UH
MY FATHER STARTED A CAKE SHOP AND..
IT SEEMED KINDA FUN..
I SEE!
ALSO,
THERE'S SOMEONE WHO ALWAYS PRAISES ME...
WORKING WITH THAT PERSON'S ENCOURAGE-MENT IS MY MAIN REASON FOR..
PING!

S... SCARY...
SO! BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF THE YOUNG, HANDSOME CHEF, THERE IS SOMEONE ACTING AS A PILLAR OF SUPPORT?!
TOMOMI OHKI, 31 YEARS OLD. I LOVE OTHER PEOPLE'S LOVE STORIES!
WHOA!
WOULD THAT BE YOUR LOVER?!
CLATTER
ZZING!
OH!
COULD IT BE...
TEE-HEE
OH, PARDON ME
IT'S JUST THAT IT WOULD'VE MADE SUCH A GREAT STORY FOR THE MAGAZINE!
N-NO, JUST A SECOND! WHAT A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT!
IS IT THE OWNER?!
SO YOUR SWEETS ARE THE PRODUCT OF THE INSPIRATION YOU GAIN FROM A ROMANCE WITH AN OLDER WOMAN?
THIS WILL MAKE A GOOD ARTICLE!
THAT WOMAN IS THE PRECIOUS WIFE OF MY MASTER!
BUT I GUESS IT'S THANKS TO THAT PERSON'S PRESENCE THAT ALL OF US ARE ABLE TO TASTE THE SWEETS YOU MAKE, THEN!
WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL ♡

...YES, I SUPPOSE SO.
三友銀
HAAH
IT'S COLD..
OH, THAT'S RIGHT..
I LEFT MY COAT BACK AT NAO'S SHOP..

I HAVEN'T HEARD ANY NEWS ABOUT THE LIMITED-EDITION ITEM, SO HE MUST STILL BE LABORING OVER IT..
SHOULD I GO GET IT? NAO SHOULD STILL BE THERE..
JUST THINKING ABOUT SEEING HIM,
HAS RAISED MY BODY TEMPERATURE A LITTLE..
NAO.
I DESPERATELY WANT TO SEE NAO.

?
PEEK
OKAY, I'D LIKE TO TAKE SOME PHOTOS NOW. MAY I FIX YOUR HAIR A LITTLE?
?!
THE STORE LIGHTS ARE ON...?
BUT THEY SHOULD BE CLOSED...
WHAT THE..
OH..!
THAT'S RIGHT..
I'VE GOT A MAGAZINE INTERVIEW TOMORROW. I'M SO NERVOUS!
THAT'S ODD. I DIDN'T THINK SOMETHING LIKE THAT'D BOTHER YOU.
I'M UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING TO YOUNG WOMEN!
KIDS AND OLDER LADIES ARE FINE
THE OWNER WOULD BE FURIOUS IF SHE HEARD HIM...
GUESS I'D BETTER JUST LEAVE..
THE ONLY CO-ED SCHOOL HE ATTENDED WAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

IT'S SO BRIGHT...
IT'S SO BRIGHT WHERE NAO IS.

BAM!
BAM!
BAM!
JUMP
STOP
TURN
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT..
HURRY HOME.
KCHAK
YOU CAME FOR YOUR COAT, RIGHT?
BLUSH
NAO...!
ASADA-SAN!
BUT YOU'RE BEING INTER-VIEWED, RIGHT?!
WE'RE JUST ABOUT FINISHED COME ON IN!

YOU'RE COLD, AREN'T YOU?
...
...
I'M GOING HOME ..
ASADA-SAN?!
HEY, WHAT'S WRONG?!
DON'T WORRY. I'LL COME BACK AGAIN.
WHAT IS HE DOING OUT THERE?
NEAK

BAM!
JUMP!
HEY, LADY! WE'RE ALL DONE HERE, RIGHT?! CAN I LEAVE NOW?!
OH... YES, THAT'S FINE.
"LADY"..?
NAO!
THANKS!
MY HAND..!
MY HOUSE, COME OVER.

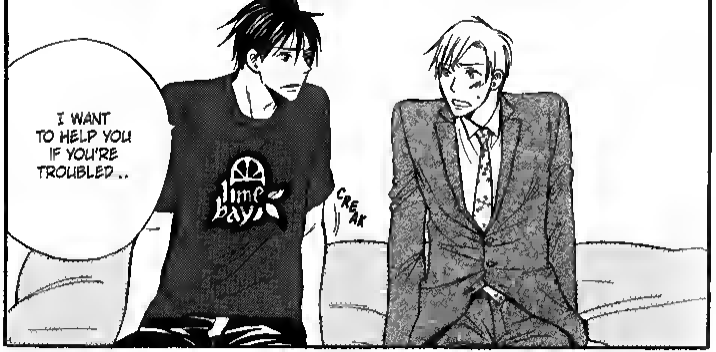
NAO...
BA-THUMP
BA-THUMP
I WANTED TO SEE HIM SO BADLY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "OH"? IT'S EMBARRASSING AND CHILDISH!
WHAT'S WITH YOU?!
LET GO ALREADY!
RELEASE
OH.
I'M SORRY.
DON'T BE MAD AT ME
BUT NOW THAT I'M WITH HIM, I JUST FEEL IRRITATED

WHAT ...?
I JUST WANT TO BE OF HELP TO YOU...
WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON?
I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING...
MY FACE... DID I REALLY LOOK THAT STRANGE?
YOUR FACE IS PRACTICALLY BLUE WITH THE COLD.
FLINCH!
TOUCH
I'LL FIX YOU SOMETHING HOT TO EAT.

AN AWARD IN A LANGUAGE I CAN'T READ... DID HE RECEIVE IT WHILE HE WAS OVER IN FRANCE?
HM?
HE'S NO LONGER THE BOY WHO HAD TO STRUGGLE TO GAIN THE ATTENTION OF HIS PARENTS.
NAO HAS TALENT... AND THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME, WHO ACKNOWLEDGE IT.
AND TOGETHER BACK THEN, WE FULFILLED THE OTHER'S NEED FOR THAT SENSE OF WORTH.
WHEN I MET NAO THREE YEARS AGO, HE AND I WERE BOTH SEEKING SOMETHING SIMILAR.
WE BOTH WANTED TO FEEL THERE WAS A VALUE TO OUR EXISTENCE.

SOME-
THING...
...I
COULDN'T
DO.
FT
BUT NAO MANAGED TO VENTURE OUT OF THAT COCOON, AND HAS OBTAINED A PLACE FOR HIMSELF IN THE LIGHT.
I HAVE NOTHING.
ON TOP OF IT ALL, I'M HOPELESSLY IN LOVE WITH ANOTHER MAN...
I'M PATHETIC
I LOVE NAO SO MUCH IT MAKES ME CRY...
AND YET, I ENVY HIM JUST AS BADLY --

BOTH ARE SIDES OF ME I DON'T WANT NAO TO KNOW ABOUT.
NA-...
FWSH
YESTERDAY.. YOU DID THE SAME THING FOR ME, REMEMBER?
ARE YOU OKAY?



WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY "THE PERSON I LOVE"?

DOES HE MEAN ME?

STOP. DON'T TAKE SUCH A CONVENIENT INTERPRETATION.

THAT CAN'T BE WHAT HE MEANS.

NAO'S "LOVE" IS NOT THE SAME AS THE SINFUL EMOTION I'M FEELING.
MY FACE IS BURNING...
I... I'M FINE, SO JUST...
I FEEL WEAK...
...LET GO...

SO WHY...

I DESPERATELY WANT TO HOLD YOU RIGHT NOW, ASADA-SAN.
...IS THIS HAPPENING?

I WANT TO CONSOLE YOU.
HUG
I FINALLY FIGURED IT OUT YOU ALWAYS SAY AND DO THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU'RE FEELING, ASADA-SAN.
IT WORRIES ME.
DOES THAT MEAN HE KNOWS EVERYTHING ALREADY?
I DON'T KNOW WHY IT IS YOU DO THAT... BUT I WISH YOU'D LET YOUR GUARD DOWN AROUND ME MORE.
I WANT TO HELP YOU
THE REASON I HURT HIM THREE YEARS AGO,
DOES HE EVEN KNOW ABOUT THAT?
CREAK...
HEY, ASADA-SAN.

DO YOU LIKE ME?
YES, I DO.
BUT I CAN'T RIGHT NOW.
YOU HATE ME?
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
SO YOU LIKE ME?
...CAN I KISS YOU?
I CAN'T MOVE...
MY BODY...

MY BODY NUMBS WHEN HE TOUCHES ME.
M,
MM...!
HAH
I CAN'T HELP WANTING HIM.
OH.
ASADA-SAN... YOUR..
TWITCH
ARE YOU HARD RIGHT NOW...?
UH...!
HUG

ASADA-SAN...
DON'T HOLD YOURSELF BACK.
KISS
NAO...!
BLUSH
S...STOP DON'T TOUCH M-...
RUSTLE
YOU'RE ALREADY LIKE THIS, JUST FROM MY KISS... IT MAKES ME HAPPY.
...OH... DON'T —
UNH...
OH...!
...!
SPURT

...IT'S KIND OF CUTE.
HAH (HAH)
I JUST, ALL I DID WAS TOUCH YOU A LITTLE BIT..
...UGH..
...HIC..
TREMBLE
TREMBLE

JOLT
ASA...
NEVER HAVING BEEN ABLE TO CATCH UP TO NAO,
UFH..
-:HIC:-
ALL I'VE EVER DONE IS BE JEALOUS OF HIM.
EVEN MY OWN BODY WON'T LISTEN TO ME...
I HATE MYSELF FOR ENJOYING HIS TOUCH.
AAH...
WHAT...?
I FEEL THE SAME WAY I DID THREE YEARS AGO.
HUFF
NOT AGAIN
...ARE YOU SATISFIED NOW...?
GASP

I WANT TO GET AWAY FROM NAO AND THIS SUFFERING
SNIFFLE
DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER CONSOLING A PATHETIC MAN LIKE ME...?
YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HOW I MEANT IT, RIGHT?
I'M SORRY IF YOU DIDN'T LIKE IT
SIT
JUST AS YOU'VE GUESSED, YES, I LOVE YOU..
BUT JUST AS MUCH
SO HONEST... SO SELFISH... SO ADORABLE
I ALSO HATE YOU.

I DON'T WANT TO FALL ANY LOWER THAN THIS

RESIGNATION
辞表
WHAT'S THIS I FOUND ON MY DESK?
THWAP
I CAN SEE THAT! BUT I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I? NOT TO QUIT?
I APOLO-GIZE
...IT'S MY RESIGNATION
I HAVEN'T DECIDED YET
...NAGANO, WAS IT? AND WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO THERE?
COME ON!
AT LEAST HAVE A PLAN BEFORE YOU RESIGN!
...I'LL BE GOING BACK TO THE COUNTRY

THERE'S NOTHING MUCH ELSE TO DO UNTIL THE FAIR ANYWAY, AND THE REST OF THE STAFF CAN TAKE CARE OF THINGS.
LOOK, I'LL GIVE YOU TWO DAYS' LEAVE.

...I UNDER-STAND.

BUT..
BUT SHOW UP ON THE ACTUAL DAY, ALL RIGHT?
ALL RIGHT?!

YEAH, IT'S BEEN AWHILE ..
I KNOW THIS IS SUDDEN, BUT I'LL BE COMING HOME TONIGHT ON THE BULLET TRAIN.

CLIK
CLIK
OH MOTHER?

...NO REASON. I JUST FEEL LIKE IT...
OH, AND,
IS MY ROOM STILL THERE?
YEAH.
OKAY, I'LL BUY IT FOR YOU BEFORE I LEAVE.

I'M SORRY, MARIKO-SAN... I'M POOPED.
I'LL TRY HARDER THIS AFTER-NOON
WHY?!
PUDDING?! THAT'S IT?! WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?!
THE CHEAPEST ITEM, OF ALL THINGS!
WHAT IS THIS..?
AH, DID YOU FINISH?
SO SLEEPY
I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THAT SPECIAL ITEM FOR THE FAIR.
.. YEAH.

A LOVE SONG FOR THE MISERABLE CHAPTER 4 / END

WHY DOES NOTHING EVER GO RIGHT FOR ME?
GREAT.. NOW THEY START RUNNING...
HOWEVER, RESUMPTION OF SERVICE IN A SECTION OF THE PRIVATE RAILWAY LINE HAS BEEN SLOW TO RECOVER...
BULLET TRAIN SERVICE STOPPED BY THE SNOW STORM YESTERDAY BEGAN RUNNING AGAIN, STARTING WITH THE FIRST TRAIN TODAY.
WHAT HAVE I DONE TO DESERVE THIS?
落ちぶれ紳士に愛の唄
CHAPTER 5

ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GET AWAY. AS FAR AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
I TURN IN MY RESIGNATION, BUT IT'S THROWN BACK AT ME.
THEN, JUST WHEN I DECIDE TO RETURN HOME TO MY PARENTS FOR THE TWO-DAY LEAVE I'VE BEEN GIVEN, A SNOW STORM BLOCKS ME.
IT'S NOON ALREADY . . .
GUESS I'D BETTER EAT SOMETHING
I WAS TOO WEAK TO ACCEPT ANY OF THEM
HIS CONFESSION OF LOVE FOR ME.
HIS KISS.
HIS CL SPING H ND.
ASADA-SAN, WAIT!!

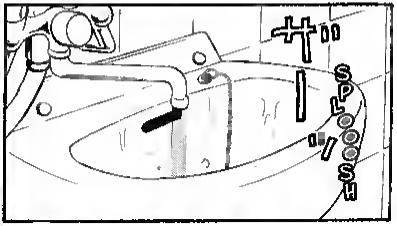
WHY DO YOU SAY YOU WON'T SEE ME ANYMORE?!
YOU AND I...
...DON'T WE FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT EACH OTHER?
NO.
SOMEONE LIKE ME, WHO NOBODY HAS ANY HOPES FOR,
THUD
AND SOMEONE SUCCESSFUL LIKE YOU.
HOW CAN YOU THINK WE'RE SIMILAR?!
WE'RE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
I FEEL MORE AND MORE MISERABLE ABOUT MYSELF THE LONGER I'M WITH YOU!

I HURT NAO AGAIN .. EVEN THOUGH I'M THE ONE AT FAULT.
I JUST CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE ..!
THAT IS MY ONLY REGRET..
IT WON'T CONNECT..
THE NUMBER YOU HAVE CALLED IS CURRENTLY OUTSIDE THE SERVICE AREA OR IS TEMPORARILY SWITCHED OFF
KCHAK
OH, NAO. WHAT'S THAT?
IS THAT A JAM?
HOW PRETTY!

...DID I ASK YOU FOR IT?!
BY THE WAY, HAVE YOU MANAGED TO GET IN TOUCH WITH ASADA-KUN?
YOU CAN'T HAVE THIS!
YOU TWO... ARE YOU FIGHTING AGAIN?
JOLT
I SEE.
SIGH
...NOT YET.
OH WELL,
WHY DON'T YOU JUST TRY TO THINK OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP AS HAVING BEEN A TEMPORARY ONE LASTING ONLY UNTIL THE END OF THE FAIR?
HE COMES DOWN TO OUR PLACE ON BUSINESS, BUT..
...WHEN THE JOB IS OVER WITH, IT'S NORMAL TO GO YOUR SEPARATE WAYS AGAIN, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S THE ADULT WAY
WELL THEN
I GUESS THERE'S NO OTHER WAY I'LL TRY CALLING HIS WORKPLACE AT SHIKISHIMA DIRECTLY.
...

GRAB
YES, I'LL DO THAT.
YES.
—OH, HELLO? YES, GOOD AFTERNOON.
I'M NAKAGAMI, FROM THE "POLAR STAR." MAY I SPEAK WITH ASADA-SAN?
WHAT? HE'S NOT IN?
HELLO?! CAN I JUST ASK YOU SOMETHING?!
NAO?!
WELL, IT'S ABOUT THE DELIVERY TIME ON THE ACTUAL FAIR DATE.

BUZZ
55
ASADA-SAN THERE'S A PHONE CALL FOR YOU IN THE SUPER-INTENDENT'S OFFICE!
ARE YOU THERE?
JOLT!


SPLOOSH

WHOA
I LOOK LIKE A CORPSE
DAZE...
I SURE SLEPT A LONG TIME..
IT'S PITCH BLACK OUTSIDE

OH, YOU'RE IN
?
IS YOUR PHONE OUT OF SERVICE?
OH, UH, NO...
I JUST HAVE THE JACK PULLED...
IT'S A CALL FROM SOMEBODY AT WORK.
...OH, I SEE...
JUST FOR AN INSTANT ...
I HATE MYSELF FOR THINKING IT MIGHT BE FROM NAO ..
YES, THIS IS ASADA.
CLAK
YO,
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
THERE'S BEEN A BIT OF REVISION ON THE TIME SCHEDULE. HAVE YOU GOT A FAX MACHINE THERE?
YES, I DO...
ALL RIGHT, I'LL JUST SEND IT OUT TO YOU.
OH, AND, ANOTHER THING. I DIDN'T KNOW THE BLIZZARD HAD DELAYED YOU...

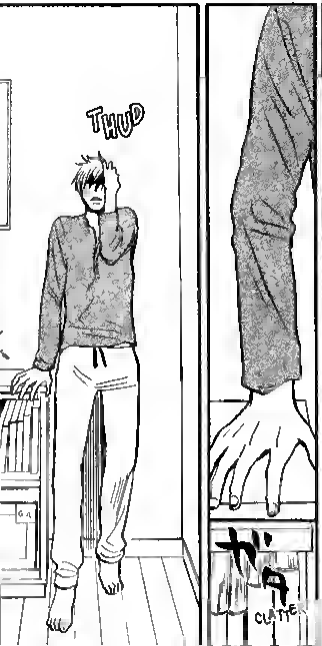
SO I TOLD THAT CHEF AT THE "POLAR STAR" THAT YOU'D ALREADY LEFT FOR YOUR PARENTS' HOME IN NAGANO...
WHA-...?!
HE SAID YOU GUYS WERE PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS, SO I TOLD HIM...
...BUT THEN HE ASKED FOR THE ADDRESS AND THE PHONE NUMBER. WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?
WHAT?!
DON'T WORRY. I WOULDN'T GIVE OUT INFORMATION OF THAT KIND.
BUT HE WAS REALLY IN A STATE OF PANIC.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HE WAS GONNA DO... DID SOMETHING HAPPEN? IS THAT STORE IN TROUBLE?
ASADA?
CLATTER
HEY?
HELLO?
WHAT IS HE THINKING...?
THAT FOOL...

WHAT IS HE PLANNING ON DOING AFTER FINDING OUT WHERE I AM?
WAS HE GOING TO NAGANO TO LOOK FOR ME...?
NAH, THAT COULDN'T BE.
BUT HE RUNS BLINDLY WHENEVER HE'S TROUBLED...
NAO, RUNNING ..
THUNK
WHAT DOES IT MATTER TO ME...?
THAT'S RIGHT,
IT DOESN'T CONCERN ME
SO WHAT IF HE'S LOOKING FOR ME?
SO WHAT IF HE'S RUNNING?
IT DOESN'T CONCERN ME, AS LONG AS I DON'T SEE HIM.

PIP
BUT,
IT'S NAO.
INCOMING CALL FROM NAO IWASAKI
PRRRRR
NAO WANTS TO SEE ME?

W.. WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?!
WHAT'S WITH THAT PITIFUL TONE OF VOICE?
A TRAIN IS APPROACHING THE NUMBER ONE PLATFORM THE YELLOW
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION. JUST WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
WHEN I HEARD YOU'D GONE BACK HOME TO YOUR PARENTS'
SCRATCH
WHERE WERE YOU PLANNING ON GOING WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW THE ADDRESS?
ASADA-SAN?!
OH...!
IT MUST THROUGH..

BEEP
WHERE ARE YOU?
TELL ME, PLEASE?!
I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T EVER COMING BACK AND..!
STUPID FOOL..
...GO BACK
OH... MY BATTERY'S ABOUT TO DIE
BEEP
BEEP


THUD
CLATTER

USTLE
USTLE
WHAT?
IF YOU WANT TO SEE ME, I'LL SEE YOU SO GO BACK TO YOUR PLACE... NOW!!

ASADA-SAN...
HUFF
I'M THE ONE WHO'S A STUPID FOOL...
WHY CAN'T I ESCAPE FROM THE SAME PLACE AS HE DID?
REALLY SUCH A FOOL...

SO YOU... HADN'T LEFT FOR NAGANO...
NAO...
DASH
I'M SO GLAD...
I... AFTER I FINISHED WORK, I...
...WENT TO TOKYO STATION AND...
DON'T DO THINGS LIKE THAT ANYMORE.
THAT'S ALL I CAME TO SAY.
GASP
...THAT'S ALL ..?
TURN
IT'S ONLY BECAUSE YOU CALLED ME LIKE THAT...

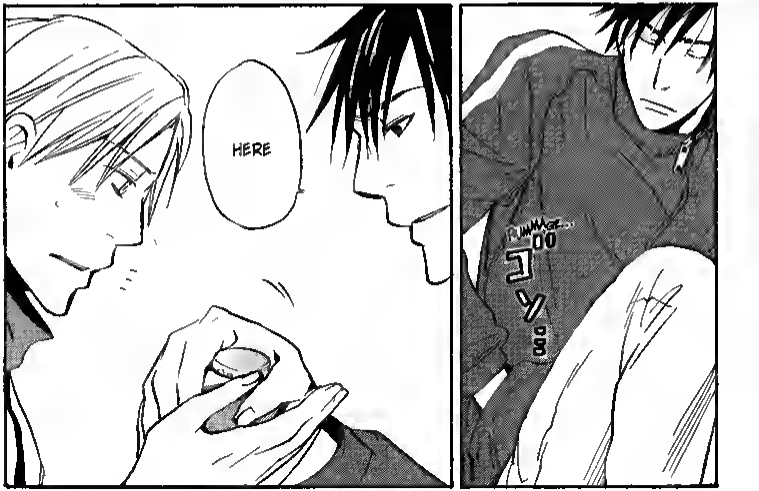
BECAUSE YOU'LL RUN AWAY.
FUNCH
WHAT ARE YOU ...?!
CLIK
CHAK
GRAB
YOU'RE PLANNING ON RUNNING AFTER YOU'VE SAID WHAT YOU WANT, AREN'T YOU?
I WON'T ALLOW THAT ANYMORE.

THUMP
DON'T DISAPPEAR FROM ME ANYMORE...
...LET GO OF ME.
NO.
LET GO...!
I WON'T...

I WANT TO STOP THIS ..!
I JUST WANT TO BE RELEASED FROM THIS SUFFERING...
I LOVE YOU, AND YET IT HURTS!
...I..
AND EVERY TIME I FEEL HURT, I END UP HURTING YOU, TOO...
I RUN FROM YOU... AND YET, WHEN I'M AWAY FROM YOU, I LONG TO SEE YOU....
IT'S THE SAME CYCLE, OVER AND OVER AGAIN...

...BUT I'LL BE LONELY WITHOUT YOU.
THREE YEARS AGO, WHEN YOU AND I PARTED, I WAS REALLY LONELY.
FLINCH
I DIDN'T KNOW WHY YOU'D REJECTED ME...
I EVEN TRIED TO FORGET YOU.
BUT THE MORE I TRIED TO FORGET, THE MORE I REMEMBERED
THAT'S WHY I REBELLED AGAINST IT WITH ANGER... TO TRY TO COME TO TERMS WITH MY FEELINGS.

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE APART FROM THE PERSON YOU LOVE...
NAO...


HERE
UNHAGE...
コソ:3

WITH WESTERN PEARS, EVEN AFTER THE FLAVOR HAS DIMINISHED, IT BECOMES DELICIOUS AGAIN IF YOU STEW IT LIKE THIS.
IT'S A JAM OF WESTERN PEARS AND VANILLA.
SPARKLE
SO... WHAT'S YOUR POINT...?
OH, BUT I USED PROPER FRESH ONES IN THIS, THOUGH!
THAT'S HOW YOU'VE BEEN FEELING, TOO ISN'T IT, ASADA-SAN?
WESTERN PEARS ARE REALLY BITTER WHEN THE FLAVOR HAS DIMINISHED.

THE OTHER TIME, I MADE YOU ANGRY BUT,
ALL I WANTED WAS TO SHOW YOU KINDNESS.
WILL YOU TASTE IT?
PLOP...
THIS...
...IS THE TASTE OF NAO'S FEELINGS...

...
VERY SWEET...
IS IT GOOD?
...AND KIND.
H...
THIS ISN'T FAIR..
I KNOW.
YOU'RE NOT PLAYING FAIR... DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
IT'S THIS PART OF YOU THAT I...!

- DO YOU HATE ME?
...I LOVE YOU.

HIS HANDS, WHICH HAVE BEEN EXTENDED TO ME SO OFTEN,
CAN I . STAY NEAR YOU?
THIS TIME
NUZZLE
...YES.
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO GRIP THEM BACK.

NAO...
I LOVE YOU, NAO...
CREAK
RELAX. OKAY?
OH!

SHOVE
CREAK
...OH!
SHIVER
SHIVER
UNNH...
WHEEZE...
I'M SORRY, ASADA-SAN..
I DON'T THINK I...
HAH.
UH...

OUCH..!
GRIP
HAH
...DOES IT HURT?
NAO...
PLEASE...
S...
KEEP GOING...

I'M SO HAPPY...
I'LL...
...TRY TO BECOME STRONGER ... SO...
ALWAYS STAY NEAR ME...

AND THIS MARKS THE DISBANDING OF THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION!
THANKS FOR WORKING HARD THESE LAST THREE DAYS.
SHISHIMA
MY FIRST AND ONLY PROJECT WITH THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION IS OVER.
THAT FAVORITE STORE OF YOURS WAS A GREAT SUCCESS.
COMPLETELY SOLD OUT
HERE'S THE PROFITS REPORT.
HERE YA GO.
IN A CHANGE FROM LAST YEAR'S VENUE, THE FAIR OPENED IN THE FIRST FLOOR HALL
THE FEATURED NUMBER OF SHOPS WAS SCALED DOWN, BUT THIS WAS MADE UP FOR IN THE NUMBER OF UNIQUE SWEETS WHICH LINED THE BOOTHS.
AND THE CUSTOMERS PEEKED INTO THEIR CAKE BOXES
SEEING THIS MADE ME FEEL CONTENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.

...I ENJOYED BEING IN THE EVENTS PLANNING DIVISION, SIR
BEING LOVED BY NAO HAS CHANGED ME A LITTLE.
HUH? REALLY?
YES, IT WAS FUN.
IT WAS ALL JUST A PAIN IN THE ASS TO ME.
THEN YOU'LL DO OKAY AT THE NEXT PLACE, TOO, EH?
...YES.
I HAD HIM TEAR UP MY RESIGNATION AFTER THAT.
HA HA...
QUOTAS ARE TOUGH FOR SUITS. YOU PREPARED?
OH WELL...
GO TO LOTS OF PLACES AND HAVE THEM TEACH YOU ALL KINDS OF THINGS, Y'HEAR?
WE ONLY HAD A SHORT TIME TOGETHER, BUT IT WAS GOOD WORKING WITH YOU.
I'M BEING TRANSFERRED TO A MUCH TOUGHER PLACE.
...WHAT?

I'M GONNA BE QUITTING THIS PLACE.
HUH?!
I DON'T WANNA BE RELOCATED OUT TO THE PROVINCES...
YUP... WELL, THAT'S HOW IT IS
BUT NEW GOALS KEEP ME LOOKING FORWARD
I FEEL GREAT.
OH, ASADA-SAN!
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
GOOD JOB AT THE FAIR
THE PROFITS REPORT CAME OUT.
I'LL LOOK AT IT LATER.
YOU HAVEN'T TASTED MY LIMITED-EDITION ITEM YET, RIGHT?
I'LL GET IT FOR YOU NOW

OH.
GIVE THAT TO ME, ASADA-KUN!
SO I HEAR YOU'LL BE DONNING A SUIT AT YOUR NEXT JOB?
YES.
OOH, HOW NICE!
TALK NAO INTO DRESSING UP A BIT NICER, TOO, WILL YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU GUYS LOOKING SO HAPPY FOR?
OH. UH, NO, WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING WORK.
THAT'S... A GOOD IDEA..
NAO IN A SUIT.
OH, YOU THINK SO, TOO? FUN, RIGHT?
...YOU SURE LOVE YOUR WORK, DON'T YOU, ASADA-SAN?
I ADMIRE YOU.
THE LIMITED ITEM IS A FRUIT FLAVORED CHOCOLAT

AS I WALK AHEAD INTO THE FUTURE, I ALWAYS WANT NAO THERE BY MY SIDE.
..IT MAKES ME KINDA JEALOUS
- YES, LATELY
ALTHOUGH, I CAN'T LIVE FOR JUST WORK OR LOVE ALONE,
LOVE SONG FOR THE MISERABLE / END

US $12.95

A LOVE SONG for the MISERABLE

Profile
YUKIMURA

Ever since I drew this manga, I've acquired the habit of ordering two cakes at once. A blissful but dangerous habit...

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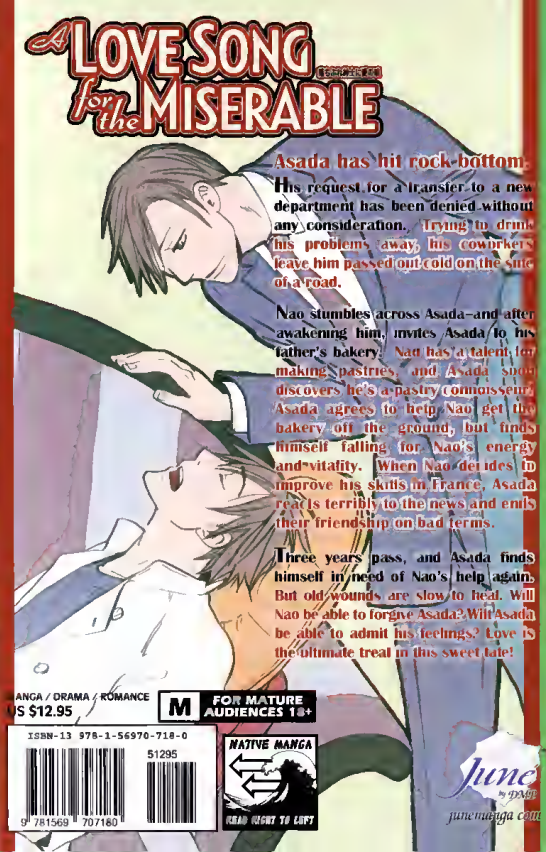
A LOVE SONG for the MISERABLE
YUKIMURA
June



Asada has hit rock-bottom. His request for a transfer to a new department has been denied without any consideration. Trying to drink his problems away, his coworkers leave him passed out cold on the side of a road.

Nao stumbles across Asada—and after awakening him, invites Asada to his father's bakery! Nao has a talent for making pastries, and Asada soon discovers he's a pastry connoisseur. Asada agrees to help Nao get the bakery off the ground, but finds himself falling for Nao's energy and vitality. When Nao decides to improve his skills in France, Asada reacts terribly to the news and ends their friendship on bad terms.

Three years pass, and Asada finds himself in need of Nao's help again. But old wounds are slow to heal. Will Nao be able to forgive Asada? Will Asada be able to admit his feelings? Love is the ultimate treat in this sweet tale!

MANGA / DRAMA / ROMANCE
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NATIVE MANGA
READ RIGHT TO LEFT

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Where girls gather...
&
boys play...

News
Forums
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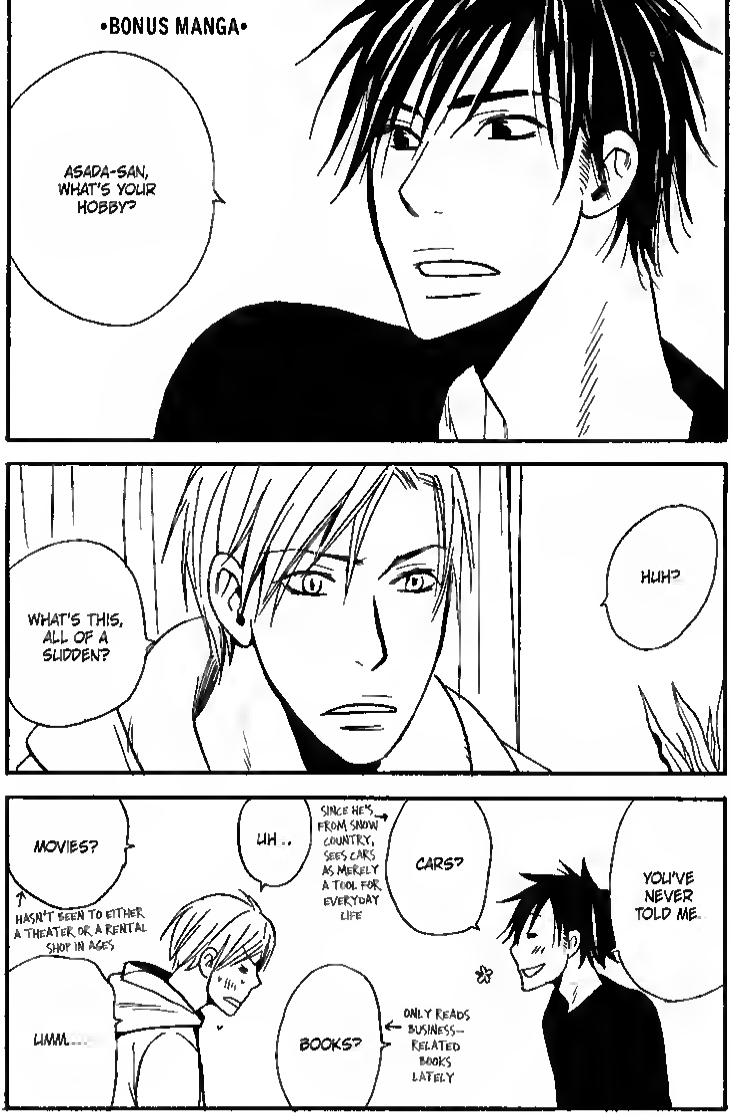
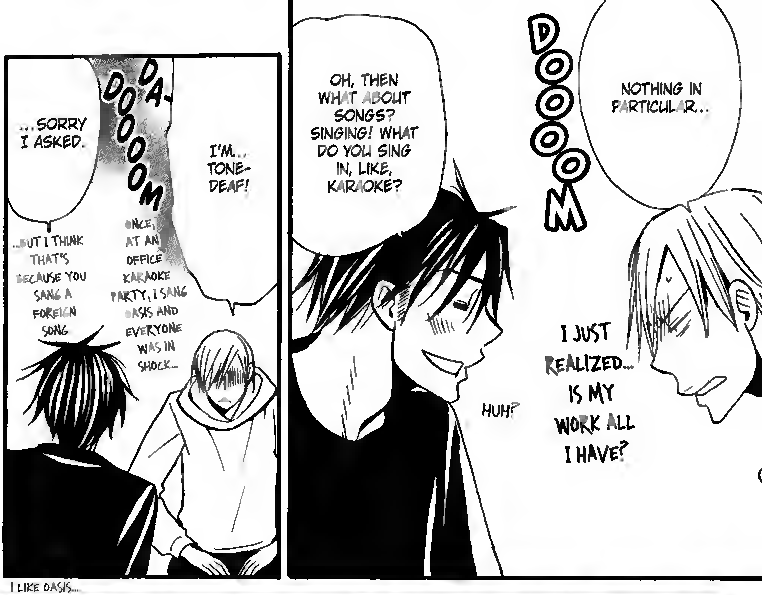
Blog
Merchandise
uke


•BONUS MANGA•
ASADA-SAN, WHAT'S YOUR HOBBY?
WHAT'S THIS, ALL OF A SUDDEN?
HUH?
MOVIES?
HASN'T BEEN TO EITHER A THEATER OR A RENTAL SHOP IN AGES
UH..
SINCE HE'S FROM SNOW COUNTRY, SEES CARS AS MERELY A TOOL FOR EVERYDAY LIFE
CARS?
YOU'VE NEVER TOLD ME.
UMM.....
BOOKS?
ONLY READS BUSINESS-RELATED BOOKS LATELY

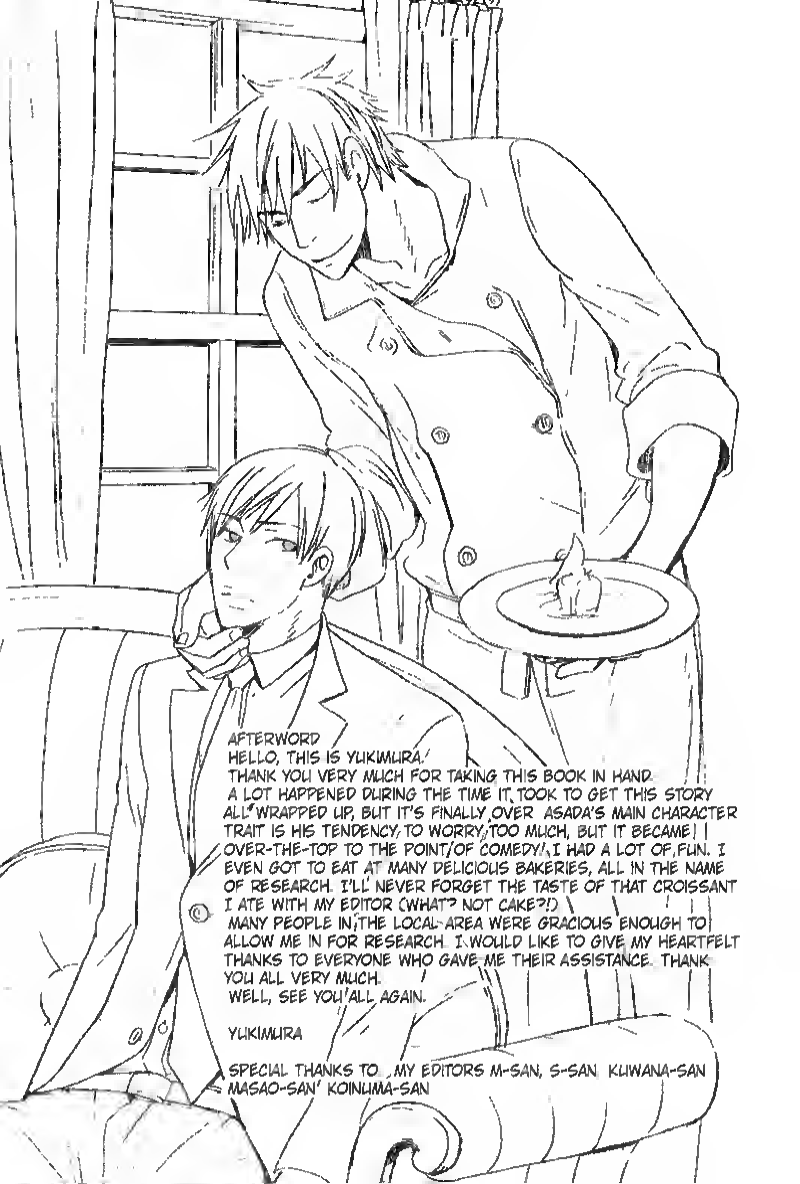

NOTHING IN PARTICULAR..
DOOOOM
I JUST REALIZED... IS MY WORK ALL I HAVE?
OH, THEN WHAT ABOUT SONGS? SINGING! WHAT DO YOU SING IN, LIKE, KARAOKE?
HUH?
I'M... TONE-DEAF!
DA-DOOOOM
ONCE, AT AN OFFICE KARAOKE PARTY, I SANG OASIS AND EVERYONE WAS IN SHOCK...
...BUT I THINK THAT'S BECAUSE YOU SANG A FOREIGN SONG
... SORRY I ASKED.

I LIKE OASIS...

SORRY I'M SUCH A BORING PERSON, NAO. .
BLUSH
OH COME ON, NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE
IT'S JUST.. I WANTED US TO HAVE MORE IN COMMON

LET'S START WITH SOMETHING REALLY EASY. YOU'RE DETAIL-ORIENTED, ASADA-SAN, SO IT SHOULD SUIT YOU.
AND THEN MAYBE SOMEDAY IN THE FUTURE ...
NO WAY! I COULD NEVER...
HUH?!
THEN HOW ABOUT BAKING CAKES?
THE FUTURE?
OH, UH! SO HOW ABOUT IT? WANNA TRY?
!
THIS... IS FUN...
I'M MOVED.
I'LL DO IT.
I SHOULDN'T ASK HIM TO RUN A STORE WITH ME...
HE LOVES HIS CURRENT JOB
MY WISH JUST SLIPPED OUT...

BONUS MANGA / END



AFTERWORD

HELLO, THIS IS YUKIMURA.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THIS BOOK IN HAND.

A LOT HAPPENED DURING THE TIME IT TOOK TO GET THIS STORY ALL WRAPPED UP, BUT IT'S FINALLY OVER. ASADA'S MAIN CHARACTER TRAIT IS HIS TENDENCY TO WORRY TOO MUCH, BUT IT BECAME OVER-THE-TOP TO THE POINT OF COMEDY! I HAD A LOT OF FUN. I EVEN GOT TO EAT AT MANY DELICIOUS BAKERIES, ALL IN THE NAME OF RESEARCH. I'LL NEVER FORGET THE TASTE OF THAT CROISSANT I ATE WITH MY EDITOR (WHAT? NOT CAKE?!)

MANY PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL AREA WERE GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO ALLOW ME IN FOR RESEARCH. I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE MY HEARTFELT THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO GAVE ME THEIR ASSISTANCE. THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH.

WELL, SEE YOU ALL AGAIN.

YUKIMURA

SPECIAL THANKS TO: MY EDITORS M-SAN, S-SAN. KUWANA-SAN MASAO-SAN KOINUMA-SAN